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AMERICA IN WWII

The War • The Home Front • The People
December 2017, Volume Thirteen, Number Four



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COVER SHOT: A nervous smile shows that this freshly captured German soldier understands why he's been singled out for a photo: his Hitler mustache. The Yanks must have busted a gut over "capturing the Führer." Men of the US Ninth Army's 30th Division swept up this POW after crossing the Roer River and pushing deeper into Germany. They planned to go all the way to Berlin, Adolf Hitler's capital. NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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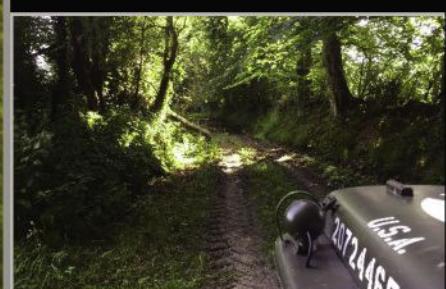
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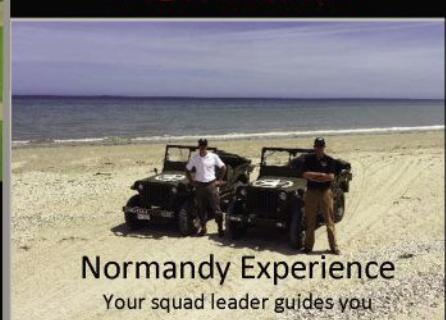
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★
KILROY
WAS HERE

Yes, Luxembourg, There Is a St. Nicholas

MY DAD WAS A VERY POWERFUL MAN WHEN I WAS A KID. For a time in the early seventies, he was president of the Roxborough Park Civic Association. As far as I knew then, the Roxborough Park neighborhood in northwest Philadelphia was a city unto itself. Now that I know better, I can say that what Dad's position lacked in clout and remuneration, it more than made up for in time and energy required.

Roxborough Park was a working-class handful of blocks where modest Cape Cods flanked tree-lined streets. No one we knew had a lot of money, but no one was in obvious trouble, either. When I first read the article "When St. Nick Was a Corporal," on page 36 in this issue, it occurred to me that Wiltz, Luxembourg, may have had more than a bit in common with the little neighborhood of my childhood—except, of course, that Wiltz was in the midst of a world war at the time in which the article is set.

The accomplishments of the Roxborough Park Civic Association were well worth all the hard work, so says this former youngster who did little of it. As I read the St. Nick article, I thought of one particular success. One year an association member had the idea to chauffeur Santa Claus to each house—much like the idea an America GI had for bringing St. Nicholas to the kids of Luxembourg in December 1944. Our Santa didn't just visit; he brought a present for each kid. I don't recall what he gave me, but I do know I received a good number of GI Joes back in those days. The gifts Luxembourg's kids received that year from St. Nick, a *real-life* GI Joe, were no doubt more modest, but, given the circumstance, even more appreciated.

Richard Brookins, a corporal with the US Army's 112th Infantry Regiment, was that real-life GI Joe. Initially he had to be coaxed into taking on the role of the saint, but once he was appropriately outfitted, settled in the back seat of a jeep, and waving hello to local children, he warmed up quickly to the situation. Volunteers often discover that they get as much out of a situation as the people they're helping.

Christmas tends to inspire people to help others, even something as simple as waving another driver into the only open parking spot within half a mile of the mall. And who is St. Nick, or Santa Claus, but the embodiment of such acts of kindness? Dressed in priestly vestments or in a red-and-white suit, he stands for some of our highest ideals: peace, love, harmony, generosity, selflessness. We in America, in Luxembourg, and in every other place needed him during World War II, and through the decades of the so-called Pax Americana that followed. And we need him now. Thank God—and Richard Brookins, and my dad, and hundreds of millions of others—that there is a St. Nicholas.



Carl Zebrowski
Editor, *America in WWII*

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APOLOGY TO PROMETHEUS BOOKS

IN THE OCTOBER 2017 issue of this magazine, I reviewed *Divided on D-Day: How Conflict and Rivalries Jeopardized the Allied Victory in Normandy* by Edward E. Gordon and David Ramsay. While awarding a generally positive judgment of the authors' work, I devoted the final paragraph of my review to identifying what appeared to be editorial flaws on the part of Prometheus Books. These included inconsistent usage, incorrectly identified photos, and the absence of an index—all of which I attributed to the publisher. Largely due to my own haste to submit, at the time of writing, I was unaware that Prometheus had provided me with an advance reader's copy that had not yet been corrected. This was brought to my attention shortly after the issue went to press, and I am informed that the flaws noted in that advance copy were corrected before *Divided on D-Day* was published for sale. I apologize to Prometheus Books and take full responsibility for this misunderstanding.

KEN S. MUELLER

FACTUAL INCORRECTNESS

IT WOULD APPEAR that political correctness is alive and well at *America in WWII*. The article "Atomic City, Tennessee" in the February/March 2017 issue contains a letter written shortly after the war by a combat Marine to his brother, a worker at this secret facility which produced refined uranium for use in the first atomic bomb dropped on Japan. The letter, thanking the brother for his part in helping to end the war, contains this phrase: "since the atomic bomb was first [used]." I could be wrong, but I'm guessing that the bracketed word "used" was substituted by the article's author for the actual wording in the letter, which was probably something more like "used against the Japs."

If I'm right, it's a sad thing when your magazine is more concerned with hurting the feelings of our former enemy than with

printing this marine's historic letter as it was written.

JAMES B. WALKER
master sergeant, US Air Force (retired)
Dayton, Ohio

Robert Gabrick responds: *James B. Walker can rest assured that there was no intent to substitute the word "used" for the letter's actual wording in an effort to be "more concerned with hurting the feelings of our former enemy," thus adhering to a kind of political correctness. The sentence ends with one word, and it is illegible. I chose "used" to represent this word, enclosing it in brackets to indicate that it was my choice. I believe it accurately reflects the intent of the letter's author.*

Editor's note: *If political correctness is an offense committed by overzealous partisans on one side, overzealous partisanship pushing back from the other is no better. Especially fitting in the case here is the venerable platitude "If you go looking for trouble, you will find it."*

For the record, we do print "Japs" when it appears in GIs' writings. We like to be civil, but we also like to faithfully represent the thoughts and feelings of the era. Enemies at war tend to call each other names—and it's the least of the evils on display.

THE FIRST NUKE REACTOR
THERE MAY BE AN ERROR in Landings in

the February/March 2017 issue. In the "In A Nutshell" block among the reasons to visit in the "Why" is "The world's first nuclear reactor." Author Robert Gabrick may have accidentally conflated the presence of a reactor on site with the articles he mentioned from the University of Chicago. The first Atomic Pile, the original term for a nuclear reactor, was built by Enrico Fermi and his team in the tunnels under the football stadium at the University of Chicago in 1942. To further confuse matters is the fact that Fermi was already working for the Manhattan Project at that time and was at Oak Ridge when the X-10 Reactor went on line in 1943.

VINCE MURPHY
Lincoln, Nebraska

M IS FOR 'GENERAL MOTORS'

THE STORY BY BILL SLOAN, whose writing I really enjoy, had a bit of a goof on page 15 ["Like Shooting Turkeys," August 2017]. It said that Lieutenant George Brown was flying a TBF Avenger, designated with a TBF because that was what General Motors called them. I believe if it were built by General Motors, the proper designation would be TBM. It was a really exciting article just the same.

DAVE LE FEVRE
received via e-mail

GREMLINS

April/May 2017: Home Front, "America First"—Charles Lindbergh received the Medal of Honor in 1927 for his solo trans-Atlantic flight, not after the war for his contribution to the war effort.

August 2017: "The Princess and the Americans"—Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom was crowned in 1953, not 1952.

Send us your comments and reactions—especially the favorable ones! Mail them to V-Mail, *America in WWII*, 4711 Queen Avenue, Suite 202, Harrisburg, PA 17109, or e-mail them to editor@americainwwii.com.

What's So Funny?

by Carl Zebrowski

Fibber McGee: Hi, Uppity. Fling the frame on a chair and I'll tell you how we celebrated Father's Day in [drowned out by studio laughter].

Uppity Uppington: Oh? And how did we, Mr. McGee?

Fibber: It was "Pop, Pop, Pop," all day long.

Uppity: Oh.

Fibber: You get it, girls? Father? Pop? It's a kind of subtle play on words.

Molly: 'Tain't funny, McGee.

SO WENT A ROUTINE that was instantly familiar to fans of the popular WWII-era radio comedy *Fibber McGee and Molly*: Fibber makes a pun but no one reacts, then he explains why everyone should be laughing, and his wife ends the bit with one of the show's signature lines.

Although this particular sample of by-gone humor still has the ability to make most of us chuckle, we may find that our response is similar to Molly's when we're presented with other old jokes. Reading classic comics, for example, you may wonder what you're supposed to find funny. You reread the words. You scrutinize the brush strokes and squiggles. But it turns out there just isn't anything funny—at least not to someone who wasn't birthed in the same culture as the joke.

Sometimes humor fades over time because a latter-day audience doesn't understand the references. Take the comedic prop alum, for instance, familiar to fans of Golden Age Bugs Bunny cartoons. No longer a common pantry item, alum is a powdered aluminum salt that was used as a preservative in pickling. Curly Howard revealed the gut-busting possibilities of the substance in the wartime Three Stooges episode "No Census, No Feeling." Crashing a bridge



"'Taint funny, McGee," was the signature *Fibber McGee and Molly* line. Listeners thought, 'Tis funny indeed.

party attended by snobbish matrons, he goes into the kitchen to mix a batch of lemonade and mistakenly grabs alum from the cupboard instead of sugar. When the women sample his shockingly astringent concoction, their faces pucker up, and even their dresses shrink tight. Moe comments that his drink seems to be "a little heavy on the angora bitters. In fact, I think the goat walked right through it."

Like alum, castor oil was another household supply that every mother of that era kept on hand. Many a kid back then endured being forced to down a spoonful of this unctuous liquid by a well-intentioned but insistent mom. The natural laxative's taste and mouthfeel were truly disgusting, as Tom the cat discovered in the 1943 *Tom and Jerry* cartoon "Baby Puss." A neighbor girl playacting as a stern mother threatens Tom for disobeying her: "I will hold your little nose and I will pour castor oil in your mouth, and it will taste awful bad." Of course, Tom misbehaves again, and she follows through on her promise. As Jerry the mouse laughs—and the viewer

presumably does the same—Tom runs to an open window to get sick.

Besides props and their unfortunate consequences, another comedic staple was the stereotype. Blondes, especially those who purchased their hair color by the bottle, were the subject of a solid handful of widely released wartime comedies: *Blonde and Groom* (1943), *Blonde Fever* (1944), *What a Blonde* (1945), and *Hold that Blonde!* (1945). The blonde film with the biggest star power was probably *My Favorite Blonde* (1942), with flaxen-haired Madeleine Carroll as a secret agent opposite Bob Hope as the owner of a penguin signed to a Hollywood contract. The two meet on a train as she's fleeing Nazi agents. A stereotypical man-blonde exchange follows. She: "Look at me." He: "I'm looking." She: "You've got to trust me." He: "I'm not through looking yet." There was usually at least a hint of sexism in blonde comedy.

As poorly as blondes were treated, black people fared much worse, an all too common theme in American history. It was hardly a laughing matter. Consider the Johnson Smith and Company Novelties catalog of 1942. One item hawked inside was "Negro Make-Up" featuring "odd eyes" and "buck teeth." Another lamentable standout was the selection of three different statuettes of a black child sitting bare-butted on a chamber pot.

The list of the Formerly Funny goes on. Fibber McGee, for one, appears under a whole list of categories that file under that heading: he explained his jokes, he invented worthless gadgets, he schemed to get rich quick, he fished (yep, that itself was considered funny), and he was a blowhard who talked a big game. Of course, if you listen to the *Fibber McGee and Molly* show for a while, once you acclimate yourself to the style, you can't help but crack a smile. Maybe what makes us laugh doesn't change all so much, after all. ★



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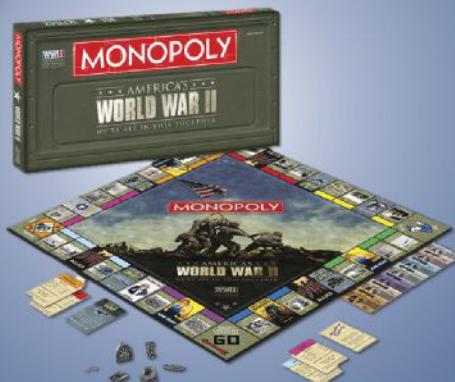


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AMERICA IN WWII

PINUP

Rita Hayworth

FOR THE GREAT AMERICAN LOVE GODDESS, fame came as naturally as thick Spanish eyebrows. Born Margarita Cansino, in Brooklyn in 1918, she was still in elementary school when she moved with her dancer parents to Los Angeles.

Hayworth was about 18 when she landed a Columbia Pictures contract with help from her manager, and spouse, Edward Judson, at whose urging she downplayed her heritage to widen her appeal. A name change, makeover, and dye job later, redhead Rita Hayworth was born. She went on to star alongside many of the era's greats, including Cary Grant in *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939) and Fred Astaire in *You'll Never Get Rich* (1941).

Hayworth's dancing with Astaire brought stardom. Theaters were overwhelmed by ticket lines for her 1944 hit *Cover Girl*. Two years later, an A-bomb test in the Marshall Islands was to feature a bomb bearing her visage, according to rumor. The "bombshell" raged over that one, but handlers dissuaded her from responding publicly for fear of damaging her image.

Best known for her forays into film noir, including 1946's *Gilda*, Hayworth continued acting into the 1970s and was eulogized by President Ronald Reagan after her battle with Alzheimer's ended in 1987.

KAYLEE SCHOFIELD
editorial assistant

PHOTO COURTESY OF WWW.DOCTORMACRO.COM





Clockwise from above, left: A Sherman tank stands along the center's Army Heritage Trail in Carlisle, Pennsylvania; a 3-inch Gun M5, one of 2,500 made, could penetrate 3.31-inch armor at 2,000 yards; the WWII exhibit follows GIs through training, combat, and homecoming.

1943, he was assigned to the Manhattan Engineering District's facility in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, to work on the development of the atomic bomb. Artifacts include Merritt's dog tag, Manhattan Project lapel pin, shoulder sleeve insignia, and slide rule.

The European theater display highlights Second Lieutenant John W. Putt. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Putt was training with Troop F at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. He later commanded Troop E, 104th Cavalry Regiment, in Northern France and Eastern Europe. One photo shows Putt with his wife, Wilma, an army nurse. An interactive feature in the European theater display is the simulated parachute jump, lifting visitors up a few feet and slowly lowering them.

The Asiatic-Pacific theater display includes images of Sergeant Willard F. Dominick's illustrated Pacific war diary

with notes, stories, photos, and drawings.

An opportunity to compare gear for soldiers stationed in different theaters acquaints visitors with details of WWII GI life, including rations. Packets of dehydrated baked beans and a mess kit that belonged to Sergeant Stanley E. Seig contrast sharply with Mom's home cooking.

Outdoors, the exhibits continue. The nearly mile-long Army Heritage Trail, open dawn to dusk, features a variety of exhibits and large artifacts that cover the broad history of America's wars, each with an information placard. WWII exhibits include replicas of training camp buildings. In the motor pool is a rare Engineer Motorized General Purpose Repair Truck that was used to bring special tools and equipment directly to the battlefield. The barracks feature bunks and footlockers; one footlocker is open to show pinups inside the lid and

WWII-era Camel and Lucky Strike cigarettes, Colgate Ribbon Dental Cream, Lava soap, and Lifebuoy shaving cream. The mess hall features an authentic kitchen re-creation, real enough that I worried I might be assigned KP duty.

A Sherman tank along the trail seems ready for action, awaiting its crew. And an obstacle course like the ones WWII soldiers ran is a favorite of kids; several were trying it out during my visit.

The US Army Heritage and Education Center stays true to its goal of "Telling the Army Story...One Soldier at a Time." Before exiting the Soldier Experience Gallery to visit the outdoor trail, I had scanned my dog tag one last time. I learned that Private Martin was killed in action on July 25, 1944, near Saint-Lô, France, the first day of Operation Cobra, the breakout from the Normandy beachhead. Buried in Normandy, Martin posthumously received a Purple Heart "for military merit and for wounds received in action, resulting in his death." Not all GI stories end happily but, as this army heritage center reminds us, all need to be told. ★

IN A NUTSHELL

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ROBERT GABRICK is a contributing editor of America in WWII.

WWII History, One GI at a Time

by Robert Gabrick

“ **T**HE JAPANESE CAMOUFLAGE was so complete in the high grass that Boardman stumbled into the spitting muzzle of an enemy Nambu machine gun. He just grabbed the muzzle of the gun, jerked it from the hands of the surprised Jap gunner and threw it over the crest. Then with his rifle he killed the gunner and two Jap riflemen close by.”

This story, vividly recounted by Captain Warren J. Hughes, Anti-tank Company, 17th Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, is one of many enshrined and retold at the US Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The center bills itself as the “United States Army’s preeminent museum, archive, academic library, and research complex dedicated to educating and preserving the legacy of the men and women who have served their nation as soldiers.”

For visitors, that translates to a lively presentation of army history told through stories of people who lived out that history. The center has amassed accounts like Hughes’s, together with letters, diaries, photographs, and artifacts from throughout the US Army’s long history. These form the basis of the Soldier Experience Gallery, a rich interactive display that introduces visitors to soldiers and US Army life from the Spanish-American War to the current Global War on Terror.

A free-standing closet, full of veterans’ items like those hiding in many a home closet or attic, hints at one of the gallery’s main resources: donated family artifacts. “These extraordinary objects are things worth saving,” declares a caption. “They preserve our nation’s history for future



A WWII-style army camp signpost reminds visitors to the US Army Heritage and Education Center that wherever WWII GI camps were, they were a long, long way from home.

generations. Uniforms, souvenirs, badges, and letters tell the US Army’s story through the eyes of those who lived it.”

“Telling the Army Story...One Soldier at a Time” is the gallery’s central theme. To drive this home, signs encourage visitors to pick up one (or more) of six different dog tags, each representing an actual soldier, and to follow that soldier’s story by scanning the tag at stations throughout the gallery. My tag represented Private Ernest R. Martin of Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, who served in World War II.

A large panoramic timeline of US Army history from the American Revolution to the present welcomes visitors to the gallery. Then the exhibits begin, starting with one on the process of turning civilians into sol-

ders, complete with the sound of a drill instructor barking orders. Scanning Private Martin’s dog tag, I learn that he practiced marksmanship using a 9-pound-8-ounce, .30-caliber, semi-automatic M1 Garand rifle, the army’s main service rifle 1942–1962. An M1 is on display at “Take Aim: Marksmanship,” where visitors can electronically test their shooting. A bolt-action M1903 Springfield, the army’s main service rifle 1906–1942, is available for comparison.

The “Civilian to Soldier” exhibit addresses the families soldiers left behind. A large service flag with blue stars and a gold star—each representing a family member in the service, blue for the living, gold for the fallen—highlights families’ sacrifices. In a timeless setting furnished to represent a family home, photographs of men and women who served in various wars are on display. One is Violet Kochendoerfer, a WWII member of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps. Scrapbooks provide copies of letters soldiers sent home.

In the World War II exhibit, three themes run through the coverage. “The Soldier Experience” focuses on the largest army in US history. “Consequences” examines the army’s role in postwar occupation and in the emerging Cold War. And “Innovations” catalogs WWII advancements in medicine, weapons, and tactics.

The WWII theaters of operation furnish the structure in this section. Each theater’s display addresses the three aforementioned themes through a timeline, large photographs, and artifacts that tell the stories of WWII veterans. The American theater display profiles Warren G. Merritt. Drafted in



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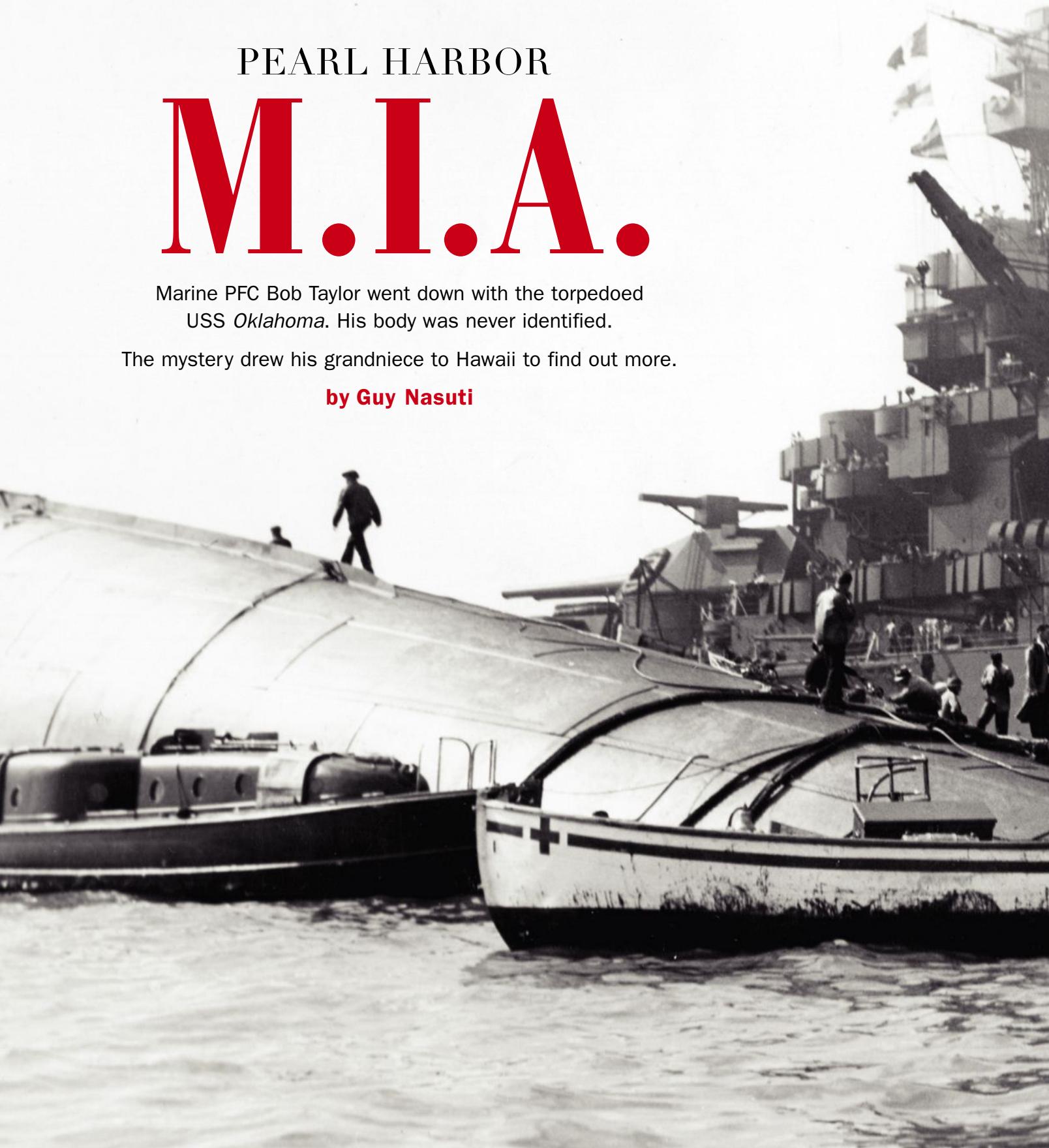
Photo: The torpedoed *Oklahoma* lies overturned in Pearl Harbor after the Japanese attack on December 7, 1941. The boat in the foreground brought rescuers from the US hospital ship *Solace*. In the background, crewmen of USS *Maryland*, which had been moored alongside *Oklahoma* in now-infamous Battleship Row, watch the rescue effort.

PEARL HARBOR M.I.A.

Marine PFC Bob Taylor went down with the torpedoed
USS *Oklahoma*. His body was never identified.

The mystery drew his grandniece to Hawaii to find out more.

by Guy Nasuti



PEARL HARBOR M.I.A. by Guy Nasuti

and interred in 45 graves at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

This unfortunate set of circumstances contrasts with that of the *Arizona* (BB-39) and *Utah* (BB-31), whose dead crewmen remain entombed in their hallowed ships. *Oklahoma* suffered the additional indignity of being raised for return to the US mainland. Then, in May 1947, she sank again, halfway between Hawaii and California, when a heavy storm caused her to list badly, almost swamping the two tugs towing her. Some believe she sank because of a vengeful crew, angry that she had been taken from her last post. After this second sinking, she was scrapped.

SIXTY-EIGHT YEARS LATER, in April 2015, Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work ordered the disinterment of the *Oklahoma* unknowns. Exactly two months later, workers from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) began exhuming the remains of as many as 388 sailors and marines. At the time, Work claimed that although he and Secretary of Defense Ash Carter would work "tirelessly" to ensure remains were recovered, identified, and returned to rest as "expeditiously as possible," "not all families will receive an individual identification."

At the Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, not far from the USS *Arizona* Memorial and other reminders of the Japanese attack, stands the \$85-million Senator Daniel K. Inouye building, which houses the Hawaii contingent of the DPAA Center of Excellence. As part of a pre-arranged tour with DPAA, Kim Schaefer, daughter of Scott Schaefer and grandniece of Bob Taylor, and I were escorted to the building's second-floor laboratory to meet with anthropologist Sabrina Ta'ala. Ta'ala explained in layman's terms how the lab extracts DNA from small pieces of human bone. We were not allowed into the lab itself, but it had an aura of honor, much like Arlington Cemetery.

This DPAA laboratory is the largest forensic skeletal laboratory in the world. The remains of up to 10 skeletons in various stages of completeness were laid out on several expensive, modern-looking hospital gurneys inside three separate extremely well-lit, large rooms. More than a few of the skeletons included only a skull and a few assorted bones. One lacked even a skull; there was perhaps a jaw or finger bone. Most of the bones were discolored, having been buried for, say, half a century in a faraway jungle in South Vietnam or seven decades in a dark forest in Germany. In some cases, additional discoloration owed to the particular fatal incident itself, such as the fire that burned the remains of a fighter-bomber pilot shot down by a missile over North Vietnam.

Listening to the professionals at DPAA discuss their jobs, I got a sense of the amount of hard work hundreds of people put into finding and identifying just one service member. Some people may

question the wisdom of investing so much in this sort of venture, but simply viewing the remains here is a truly moving experience. Ta'ala said that once the identity of an unknown is established, scientists put photographs of that service member nearby to remind them that here was what once had been a living human being who loved and was loved. Their ultimate reward comes when they get to notify surviving family members that they can prepare to accept the remains of their relative for a proper burial with full military honors.

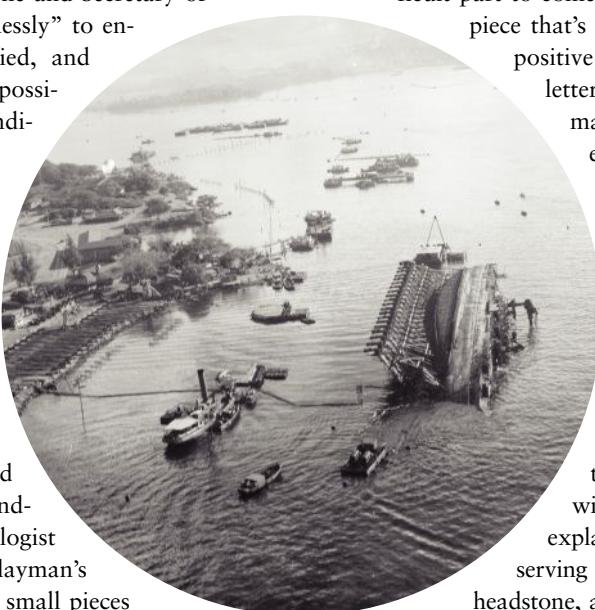
During any investigation, the DPAA provides regular updates to families, if they want them. Another nice touch provided is a copy of the service member's Individual Deceased Personnel File, the official military record containing the who, what, when, where, why, and how of death. Steve Thompson, a historian who has been with the agency since 1989, had provided Taylor's IDPF to Kim Schaefer before our trip. For many family members, it is the *how* that is first in their minds, and often that's the most difficult part to come to terms with; it's also usually the one

piece that's missing, as is true with Taylor. On the positive side, these files may contain copies of letters written to or by the deceased, information on disposition of the remains, and even some personal items.

Nearly 21 years after Bob Taylor went missing aboard *Oklahoma* and 13 years after his remains were declared "non-recoverable," his father, William, wrote to the army, on September 29, 1962, to ask whether Bob was "entitled to a memorial headstone." On October 17, a "Mr. T.W. Held," chief of the headstone branch of the army's memorial division, responded with the necessary application forms. He explained that because Bob Taylor had died serving his country, he was indeed entitled to a headstone, and this headstone could be placed "in a national cemetery or in any private or local cemetery."

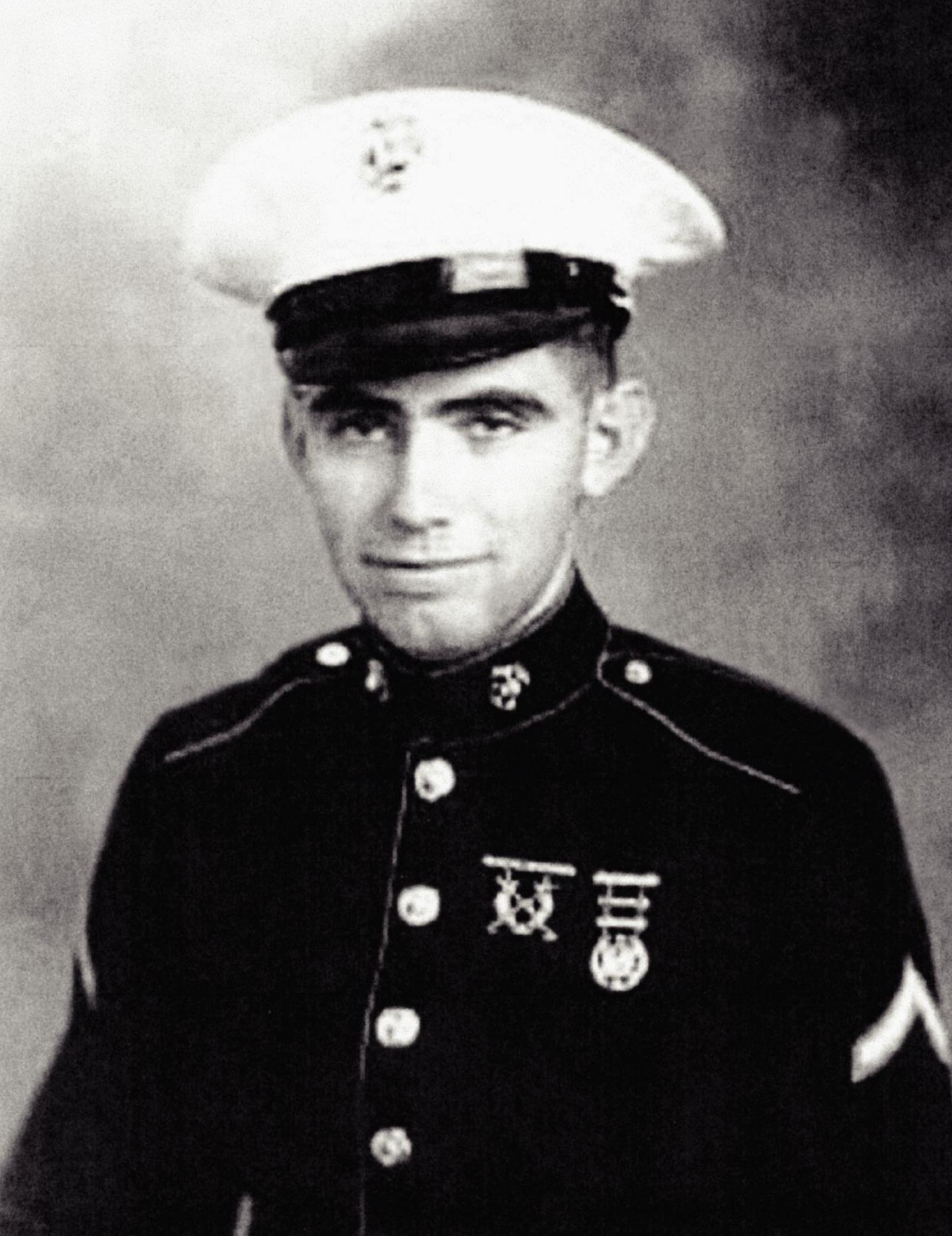
Most IDPFs go into rather graphic, but clinical, detail about how the soldier, sailor, airman, or marine was killed in combat, such as by a gunshot wound to the head or shrapnel laceration of the aorta. Some IDPFs include photographs of the deceased. In a previous job of mine, I warned people requesting these records that information and photos they received could upset them and other family members.

Fireman Third Class Glaydon Iverson of Emmons, Minnesota, was 24 years old when he was killed aboard *Oklahoma*. His parents, Edwin and Anna Iverson, received a telegram just before Christmas, on December 20, 1941, informing them that their son was "missing following action in the performance of his duty and in the service of his country." The pain of his loss was so great that the family didn't mention him for years. His brother wanted to name a son in honor of Glaydon, but he decided on Gary instead, to spare his mother the constant reminder.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Above: Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard crews work to raise the sunken *Oklahoma* in early 1943. They finished the job on June 16.



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JUST BEFORE THE CALL TO COLORS aboard *USS Oklahoma* (BB-37) on December 7, 1941, two navy ensigns were belowdecks debating whether to go swimming before or after breakfast. Then, suddenly, came a call to battle stations, as explosions rocked the ship. Edward E. Vezey Jr. and his roommate, Frank Flaherty, ran to separate gun turrets.

Moored in Pearl Harbor's now-infamous Battleship Row alongside *USS Maryland* (BB-46), *Oklahoma* was struck by three torpedoes in the first few minutes of the Japanese attack. Twenty minutes later, six more torpedoes hit her and she turned over until her masts touched the bottom of the harbor. Only her starboard side remained above water; a small section of her keel was visible. Sailors trapped inside had their world literally turned upside down.

Flaherty stayed with the ship, using a flashlight to light the way to escape for men stuck in his gun turret. The University of Michigan graduate earned the Medal of Honor for his heroics, posthumously. He died at his battle station before he could make his own way out of the dark, hellish space. Vezey, a native Texan and former Texas A&M student, was able to escape the overturned ship relatively uninjured. Then he swam through boiling-hot, oil-thick water to the *Maryland*, dodging a strafing from Japanese fighter planes. Flaherty was only 21 years old and Vezey 22.

The attack on and sinking of *Oklahoma* killed 429. Thirty-two men were cut out through the hull over the next couple of days, while many were trapped beneath the waterline, where rescuers could hear them banging on bulkheads and overheads for the next three days before all went silent. Vezey had gone back to help rescue survivors. The banging sounds haunted him for the rest of his life.

Another of the young men on board *Oklahoma* that day was Private First Class Charles Robert Taylor, a 23-year-old from Carnegie, Oklahoma. Born in Kansas a week after WWI's Armistice Day, on November 18, 1918, Bob Taylor attended college for a while before following his older brother Eugene into military service. Their father, William, was a veteran of the First World War, and Eugene had gone into the peacetime US Army Air Corps. Bob, also wanting to serve his country, traveled to Oklahoma City to enlist in the US Marine Corps on May 8, 1940.

Taylor excelled at the tough training he endured at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, earning both a globe-and-anchor pin as an expert rifleman and a coveted slot in sea school that July. On August 9, he reported for duty aboard *Oklahoma* to become a part of her marine corps detachment of some 40 men. These marines trained at the battleship's secondary batteries, stood sentry shifts, and enforced order and discipline over the several hundred sailors who lived on board.

No one knows how Taylor spent his final moments on *Oklahoma*, but not long before the Japanese attack, he'd sustained an injury that may have prevented him from escaping. An avid sports fan, he hurt himself while "engaged in organized athletics," records say. For days afterward, he was seen favoring his left leg. To speculate a bit, perhaps this injury prevented him from getting above decks and off the ship to safety. It's also possible that he realized his injured leg would slow him down, so he let others escape ahead of him, and then he was trapped or killed when one of the six follow-up torpedoes struck. Of the approximately 40 marines on board, a total of 13 were killed in addition to Taylor.

Speculation about a loved one's demise can haunt a family for decades. Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Scott Schaefer, a nephew of Taylor's who served two tours of duty in Vietnam, hopes that his uncle "went fast." Schaefer's mother, Alyne (Taylor) Schaefer, was adopted by the Taylor family in infancy, so she and Charles were sister and brother. They were the same age, but Scott does not recall her ever speaking about Charles being killed at Pearl Harbor; she was a very private woman. Because she was adopted, not a blood relative, DNA from her lineage would not help to identify Charles among the bodies of *Oklahoma* marines.

Only 35 of the 429 men killed on *Oklahoma* were ever identified. The rest were buried in mass graves in the Nu'uana and Halawa cemeteries in Honolulu. Markers note the number of bodies in each grave, and a headstone inscribed with "Unknown" stands for each body. In 1947, all the unknowns were disinterred for identification, but by that time, the technology had not advanced beyond what had been available during the war, and the attempts failed. Three years later all the unidentified remains were placed in 61 caskets



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Above: In better days a decade before the Pearl Harbor disaster, *USS Oklahoma* steams along at a steady clip. **Opposite:** Bob Taylor sits for his official boot camp portrait at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. He was aboard *Oklahoma* when the Japanese struck.



A year after *Oklahoma* was raised and refloated at Pearl Harbor (as shown here), the navy abandoned plans to restore her and put her back in service among its battleship fleet. In 1947, she sank again, while being towed through a storm to a scrapyard in San Francisco Bay.

As years turned into decades, Edwin and Anna died, after continuing to hold out hope that their son's remains would be identified and returned home. Both of them were buried in Oak Lawn Cemetery in Emmons. Gary struggled with what to do with the empty burial plot next to theirs, meant for Glaydon, and at one point he was considering selling it. Then, on December 22, 2016, he received a phone call from DPAA telling him his uncle's remains had been identified. Gary said that despite the passing of more than seven decades, the "closure for himself and the rest of the family was incredible."

FOR THE SCHAEFER FAMILY and thousands of Americans in a similar situation, the waiting continues, 76 years after the US Navy Pacific Fleet was destroyed and the *Oklahoma*

homa was sunk at Pearl Harbor. Bob Taylor's remains have yet to be identified, although DPAA disclosed to Kim Schaefer and her father that a blood relative's DNA sample is on file, which should help with identification.

In the past few years, there has been a push from the Department of Defense to identify as many of the remains as possible from Pearl Harbor's mass graves. As of February 2017, almost 30 *Oklahoma* unknowns had been identified using DNA analysis. As of this writing, 73,061 of America's WWII servicemen are still listed as missing. ★

GUY NASUTI is a naval historian and former US Navy photographer. He wrote "Day of the Kamikazes" for the February/March 2017 issue of *America in WWII*.

A black and white photograph showing a severe flood. The water is high, covering most of the visible ground. In the foreground, a large, fallen tree trunk lies across the water, with its branches extending into the frame. To the right, there is a large pile of debris, including what appears to be wooden planks and other materials that have been washed away by the flood. The background is mostly submerged, with only the tops of some structures or trees visible above the water level.

all

the way to Berlin

The men of the US Ninth Army and their get-it-done commander were raring to go, all the way to Nazi Germany's inner sanctum.

But at the gates of Adolf Hitler's capital, they got surprising orders.

by Ken S. Mueller

Background: American assault boats are strewn alongside a demolished German bridge at Linnich, Germany, on February 23, 1945. Infantrymen of the US Ninth Army's XII Corps left the boats behind after using them to cross the Roer River that morning. By February 28, the entire Ninth Army would be across, ready to press on to the Rhine River and into the very heart of Nazi Germany.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES



speaking GIs from Schuster's outfit rode atop the vehicles, and the rest of the men followed on foot as inconspicuously as possible.

The masquerading task force made its way through Oberkassel, advancing undetected almost to the river by 4:30 the next morning. At one point, a Wehrmacht unit marched past in the opposite direction; the Americans gave the customary "Heil Hitler" salute when challenged, and both groups moved on without incident. As the sky grew lighter with the approach of dawn, however, an alert German sentry discerned the column's true identity and took off on his bicycle to spread the alarm. American soldiers shot him, but in doing so they lost the element of surprise. Oberkassel came alive with wailing sirens and gunfire.

BY 9 A.M. the disguised American tanks and tank destroyers had fought their way through a final roadblock. Schuster's men, along with a battalion of the 331st Infantry, were within sight of the bridge. "Both battalions were on the approaches to the bridge when it was blown by the enemy at 0937," recounts a regimental after-action report.

With the detonation of the Oberkassel bridge, it seemed the Germans had managed to check the Allied advance at the edge of the Rhine. Simpson, however, saw the situation differently. His patrols were reporting an enemy completely disorganized after Operation Grenade and incapable of stopping an immediate crossing. Simpson wanted his Ninth Army to make an assault-boat crossing north of the Düsseldorf area near Ürdingen, where

the open terrain favored a rapid breakout. Such a crossing might shorten the war considerably, Simpson believed. But when he brought the idea to Montgomery, the field marshal responded with a terse "Don't go across."

Montgomery had his own plans for a massive, set-piece crossing of the Rhine some weeks hence. So the Ninth Army sat and waited. On March 7, the eyes of the world fixed on Remagen, some 70 miles south of Düsseldorf, as the US First Army's 9th Armored Division dramatically seized the Ludendorff Bridge. And on March 22, the attention was on Oppenheim, about 98 miles farther south, as the 5th Division of Patton's Third Army swarmed across the Rhine in assault boats, just as Simpson had proposed two weeks earlier.

While they waited for Montgomery's grand crossing, Simpson's units manned a series of outposts along the Rhine's west bank. Private First Class Kenneth G. "Bud" Mueller of Belleville, Illinois, a foot soldier in Schuster's 3rd Battalion of the 330th Infantry, wrote home to his fiancée and future wife Betty Braun, "There isn't too much doing right now. Every once in a while a barrage of German artillery comes in, but it isn't too bad. We are throwing plenty of it back at them and I know that they are sweating it out more than we are."

There were numerous German civilians still in Oberkassel, Mueller noted. The Americans kept them under close watch, allowing them out of their homes just three hours each morning to look for food. "It's hard to tell the good ones from the bad

Above: Perhaps it was the Adolf Hitler mustache that led a Signal Corps photographer to single out this POW, one of many the Ninth Army captured after it crossed the Roer. **Opposite:** More enemies awaited across the Rhine—Field Marshal Walter Model and his Army Group B.



of the Ninth Army. So the Canadians and Brits fought through the Reichswald alone, battling troops of the German 15th and 1st Parachute Armies, who were able to concentrate their fire on the threat in front of them, unworried about their flank. The Ninth Army stayed put, waiting for the flood to subside.

It was February 23 when the Roer was finally low enough for Simpson to cross. He ordered his infantry regiments across in assault boats at 3:30 A.M. after a brief but overwhelming artillery barrage. It took several days for engineers to get bridges across the river so armor could join the fight, but by February 28 the entire Ninth Army had broken out of its bridgehead, and Operation Grenade exploded into the enemy's rear areas.

The Roer crossing was a learning moment, and the next issue of the GI publication *Stars and Stripes* included lessons learned. On the “do” list were: “Overhaul your storm boat motor before a major crossing,” “Organize your assault boat teams and have experienced paddlers,” and “Have plenty of spares of everything on hand.” The “don’t” list was: “Trust to luck that the motor will run when you want it to,” “Throw away your paddle or let your boat drift away after you have reached shore,” or “Ever assume that most things will go according to plan.”

With the British and Canadians pushing down from the northwest and Simpson’s Americans pushing up from the southwest, the Germans were suddenly in a desperate situation. Despite pleas from Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, the German command-



er in chief on the western front, Hitler refused permission for withdrawal. By early March, Simpson’s troops were clearing all opposition from the Rhine’s west bank, having killed an estimated 6,000 enemy troops and taken some 30,000 prisoners. The Germans were reduced to fighting a series of delaying actions while the bulk of their surviving troops retreated across the river.

“Don’t Go Across”

AS THE ALLIED ARMIES FIRMED UP their positions along the Rhine’s west bank, the new priority became finding a bridge that the Germans hadn’t destroyed. It was no easy task, as Simpson’s men discovered at Neuss and Oberkassel, opposite Düsseldorf, on March 1.

Simpson inserted Major General Robert C. Macon’s 83rd Infantry Division on the right flank of the army’s XIX Corps early that day, and after a stiff fight, by nightfall Neuss had fallen to one of the 83rd’s regiments. Ascending a tall grain elevator there, American officers could see Düsseldorf—what one described as a “dead, lifeless giant”—on the river’s far side. But Neuss’s three Rhine bridges had been destroyed.

Just downstream at Oberkassel, elements of the 83rd Division’s 330th Infantry Regiment took a different approach. A task force, consisting of Lieutenant Colonel George Schuster’s 3rd Battalion with a company of tanks and a platoon of tank destroyers all disguised to resemble German panzers, set out after nightfall. German-

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all the way to Berlin by Ken S. Mueller

HE BROAD, DEEP WATERS of the Rhine River stretched out like an impassable chasm before the US Ninth Army as it arrived opposite the great industrial city of Düsseldorf on March 1, 1945. Beyond the mighty river lay the Americans' target: the heart of Germany, last refuge of Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime, the Third Reich. There was no way *around* the Rhine; a disastrous attempt in the Netherlands had proven that back in September. So the Ninth Army had come to the towns of Neuss and Oberkassel, on the river's west bank opposite Düsseldorf, with the same mission as Allied forces all along the Rhine's winding path: to find an intact bridge.

If the Ninth Army could find its way across the Rhine, there would be nothing to stop it until it stood at the very threshold of Berlin, capital of Nazi Germany—nothing except, perhaps, the onrushing front lines of the allies from the east, the Soviet Red Army.

The Western Allies' movement to the Rhine had started in January 1945, when American troops ousted the last German forces from the Bulge, the dangerous salient created by Adolf Hitler's December 1944 counterattack in the Ardennes Forest of Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. As US divisions reclaimed lost ground, General Dwight D. "Ike" Eisenhower, the supreme Allied commander, announced the next goal: to clear enemy forces from Germany's Rhineland region.

Ike wanted all his armies to draw up to the Rhine River more or less abreast before crossing, but first he redistributed divisions between the two massive army groups in his Allied Expeditionary Force. During December's crisis in the Ardennes, all forces north of the Bulge, including the US First and Ninth Armies, had been part of British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's 21st Army Group. The only American army to remain in Lieutenant General Omar Bradley's US Twelfth Army Group at that time was Lieutenant General George S. Patton's Third Army. Now, with the German drive defeated, Eisenhower returned Lieutenant General Courtney Hodges's First Army to Bradley's group. But to bolster Montgomery's drive in the Rhine front's northernmost sector, Eisenhower left the US Ninth Army under British command.

The Ninth Army was a relative newcomer to Europe, activated in September 1944. Its headquarters may have lacked the colorful characters that populated other armies, but it quickly built a reputation for quietly getting the job done thanks to its commander, Lieutenant General William H. Simpson. The tall, lanky Texan

was a 1909 West Point graduate and a veteran of 1916's Punitive Expedition in Mexico and of World War I's Western Front. From his Great War experience he had drawn the lesson "never send an infantryman where you can send an artillery shell."

Both Eisenhower and Bradley thought highly of Simpson and his army. Bradley described the Ninth Army as "uncommonly normal," the army that he "could count on simply to go about its business uncomplainingly and effectively, in contrast to the bumptious, noisy Third and the jealous, prima-donna First." "Texas Bill" Simpson's patience and professionalism would face a new test under Montgomery, a leader many American generals found insufferable.

Montgomery's plan to clear the Rhineland was a two-pronged thrust set to begin in early February. One prong, Operation Veritable, would send the First Canadian Army southwest from the Dutch city of Nijmegen through the Reichswald, the thick forest between the Meuse and Rhine rivers. The second prong, Operation Grenade, would funnel the Ninth Army north across the Roer River to link up with the Canadians and cut off German forces west of the Rhine.

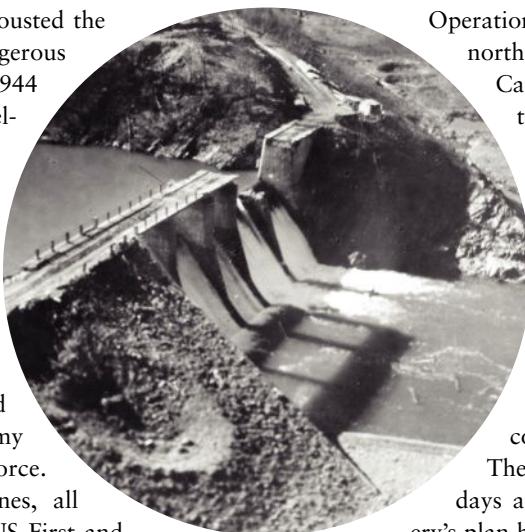
Foiled by a Flood

VERITABLE BEGAN on February 8 after a British Royal Air Force bombing and a massive cannonade. Late winter snow and rain, plus tough German resistance on terrain that favored the enemy, dealt the Canadians some of their bitterest fighting of the war. And the help they were counting on from Simpson wasn't coming.

The Ninth Army, scheduled to advance two days after the Canadians, was stuck. Montgomery's plan had failed to account for the enemy's ability to flood the Roer River.

The several Roer Valley dams had been key American objectives since the previous fall. In German hands, they were weapons; opening them could flood battlefields downstream, blocking the Allies' path. A week before Veritable kicked off, elements of the US First Army on Simpson's right had tried to break through and capture the two largest dams from behind. The first dam, on the Roer's Urft tributary, was captured intact on February 4. But when American infantrymen and engineers captured the Schwammenauel Dam three days later, its discharge valves had been smashed by the retreating Germans, slowly flooding the Roer Valley.

Montgomery let Simpson decide whether to risk crossing the river, and Simpson ruled it out. He was unwilling to risk isolating his lead elements on the far side of a flood, cut off from the rest



ALL PHOTOS THIS STORY: NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Above: Roer River water pours through the Schwammenauel Dam's sluices. As the Ninth Army approached in early February 1945, retreating Germans jammed the dam's valves open. Opposite, top: It took weeks for the resulting flood to subside. These 84th Division engineers are preparing to cross the Roer at Linnich on February 23. Opposite, center: Three days later, Ninth Army commander Lieutenant General William Simpson (right, facing camera) explored the far bank at Julich. With him is British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery (center, facing camera).

all the way to Berlin

by Ken S. Mueller

ones" wrote Mueller, "so I don't trust any of them." In a deserted house, Mueller and his buddies found a canary. They named him Champ and kept him as a company mascot. "He really is a good singer," Mueller wrote home.

More serious concerns lay ahead of Mueller and his fellow Ninth Army GIs, dangers of which they were painfully aware. "On a clear day," he wrote to his fiancée on March 16, "you can see the Jerries moving around on the other side of the river."

Encircling Germany's Defenders

IN CONTRAST TO the American Rhine crossings farther south, the 21st Army Group's crossing at Wesel, starting on the night of March 23, involved more than a million troops. Massive artillery and air bombardments came first, and two airborne divisions dropped in behind the weak and disorganized German defenses.

It was a very British moment. Prime Minister Winston Churchill was present, and the order to begin was "Two if by sea" (suggesting "the British are coming," from the story of Paul Revere's famous ride). Clearly, Montgomery envisioned a secondary role for the Americans. But the Yanks were crossing in force, too. Up river from Wesel, before dawn on March 24, Montgomery's US XVI Corps crossed after an hour of shelling by more than 2,000 guns, with waves of infantrymen in motorized assault boats tearing across the Rhine against sporadic German resistance. Once the east bank was secured, engineers quickly set to work laying a bridge that tanks could cross.

Despite bottlenecks and disputes between US and British commanders over use of the bridges, within a week the Ninth Army was pushing eastward along the Lippe River (an east-bank Rhine tributary) through the outskirts of the Ruhr, Germany's densely populated industrial district. By March 29, the Ninth Army's 2nd Armored Division was rolling through Haltern, some 25 miles east of Wesel, against crumbling German resistance. Maccon's 83rd Infantry Division followed in trucks borrowed from the XIX Corps's artillery—and in captured vehicles, including a commandeered fire engine festooned with signs proclaiming "Next stop Berlin."

To the south, on Simpson's right flank, Hodges's US First Army had broken out of its Remagen bridgehead. It began driving northeast to encircle the Ruhr from the south and to meet up with the Ninth Army near Paderborn, nearly 114 miles east of Wesel. Hodges's lead division, the 3rd Armored, gained ground by leaps and bounds, unimaginable a month earlier. Entire towns were captured undamaged.

On March 30, the 3rd Armored Division advanced 45 miles in a single day and arrived outside Paderborn. But here the tank column was brought up short. The town was home to a major training center for SS panzer troops—Nazi loyalist tank men. The trainees there mounted a resistance that was both fanatical and skillful. One 3rd Armored Division task force ran into a scratch unit of German Tiger and Panther tanks manned by students and instructors. The SS men ambushed the American column, inflict-

ing heavy losses including the destruction of more than two dozen tanks and other vehicles. The Germans cornered division commander Major General Maurice Rose when his jeep took a wrong turn. Rose was shot and killed, possibly while trying to surrender.

Rose's death underscored a bitter reality: many of the German forces that were still fighting were SS units (Schutzstaffel, or "Protection Squadron," the National Socialist party's armed wing) or Hitler Youth, zealously committed to Hitler and his Nazi ideology and regime. American soldiers, determined to make it "home alive in '45," took no chances. Bud Mueller wrote home, "When we go into an attack all I carry is rations and ammunition and I really load myself down with it.... Before I left the States I thought it would be hard to shoot another man. But after you have Jerries shooting at you it becomes easy to kill them.... I found out the only good German over here is a dead one. A lot of the boys weren't so lucky."

IN ANOTHER LETTER MUELLER WROTE, "The more a person sees of the German soldiers, the worse he hates them. I've seen quite a few of them, helped capture them and helped guard them, and also helped take some of them back to the rear. They will machine gun you and try to snipe you and then when you capture them they try to throw their arms around you and call you 'comrade.' I think once in a while the American soldiers are a little too easy with them."

The number of Germans raising their hands and shouting "Kamerad!" was about to grow dramatically. Not pausing long to dwell on its losses, the 3rd Armored continued to push north, and on April 1 linked with the Ninth Army's 2nd Armored Division just north of Paderborn. Between the two encircling American armies lay the remnants of Field Marshal Walter Model's once mighty Army Group B, along with elements of the German 15th Army, 5th Panzer Army, and 1st Parachute Army. The overwhelming power of four American army corps, supported by air forces, now focused

on destroying the German forces in the Ruhr Pocket, a battlefield 70 miles wide and 50 miles deep. In mid-April, Model dissolved his remaining forces and ordered those who could to try to break out. Asking his staff, "What is there left to a commander in defeat?" he drove to a forest north of Düsseldorf and killed himself with his service pistol. When the entire Ruhr was finally secured, the Americans counted 323,000 prisoners taken—the largest mass German surrender thus far.

To the Gates of Berlin

WITH THE RUHR ENCIRCLEMENT ACCOMPLISHED, Eisenhower returned Simpson's Ninth Army to Bradley's Twelfth Army Group on April 4, over Montgomery's protests. During the final phase of operations on the Western front, Montgomery's 21st Army Group was to advance northwest toward the Netherlands and north toward the Baltic Sea, positioning itself for possible intervention in Scandinavia should German forces there refuse to surrender.





Montgomery nixed a Ninth Army surprise crossing of the Rhine near Düsseldorf in early March 1945. But by the month's last week, Simpson finally had his whole army across. Here, over a temporary bridge on the Rhine, German POWs march west while US supply trucks head east behind the Ninth Army.

Eisenhower had his reasons. Bradley had estimated that taking Berlin would cost 100,000 casualties. Considering that no matter what the US Army did the city would be divided into four occupation zones, including a Soviet one, it seemed like a waste of American lives. Further, Eisenhower was concerned over rumors that the Nazis had created a national "redoubt" in the Alps, a hidden fortress from which they hoped to prolong the war indefinitely. Although rumors of the redoubt would later be refuted, the combination of other factors—including the possibility that hostilities might break out with Soviet forces pushing westward and intent on taking as much of the former Reich as possible for their own purposes—finally made up Eisenhower's mind.

So, on the morning of April 15, Simpson received a call from Bradley. He was to fly to Twelfth Army Group headquarters immediately. Bradley had something important to talk about, too

important to discuss over the phone. When Simpson arrived at the airfield in Wiesbaden, Germany, the two generals shook hands and Bradley got right to the point: "You must stop on the Elbe. You are not to advance any farther in the direction of Berlin. I'm sorry Simp, but there it is."

"Where in the hell did you get this?" demanded Simpson.

"From Ike," said Bradley.

The Red Army would fight the battle for Berlin. Simpson was terribly disappointed. "I was heartbroken and got back on the plane in a kind of a daze," he wrote. "All I could think of was 'How am I going to tell my staff, my corps commanders and my troops?' Above all, how am I going to tell my troops?" After the war he wrote, "I really believe that the Ninth Army could have captured Berlin with little loss and well before the Russians reached the city."

The men on the front lines were as yet unaware of the summit-

all the way to Berlin by Ken S. Mueller

The American divisions were now massed east of the Ruhr pocket, ready to pierce into the German Reich's vitals. On the other side of Germany, the Soviets had begun their own spring offensive, moving westward from the Oder River. The farther east the Western Allies could meet the Soviets, the more advantage the west would have in determining who would control postwar Europe. But the Western Allies were at a disadvantage; they were still more than 200 miles from Berlin, while the Red Army was just 50 miles from there.

What Eisenhower's troops did not know was that Eisenhower had already decided not to bother with Berlin. The Soviets were already too close to it. Besides, at the February 1945 Yalta Conference in the Crimea, the leaders of the "Big Three" Allied powers—US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Churchill, and Soviet Premier Josef Stalin—had already carved out their postwar occupation zones in Germany. Seeing no reason to expend more lives for territory that would ultimately be turned over to the Soviets, Eisenhower planned to advance no farther than the Elbe River, some 70 miles from Berlin's center.

Ninth Army spearheads slashing eastward had yet to receive the news about Berlin, however. Simpson's divisions took Hanover, about 183 miles from the capital, on April 10, and began racing to see who would establish the first bridgehead over the Elbe. In the lead was Combat Command B of the 2nd Armored Division. On April 11 it covered more than 50 miles to arrive at the outskirts of Magdeburg on the Elbe, only 50 miles southwest of Berlin's outskirts. The Germans had destroyed the river's bridges, but on April 12 three battalions of armored infantry made an assault crossing. They carved out a tenuous bridgehead that soon became the target of such zealous counterattacks by local forces of the composite Scharnhorst Division that Major General Isaac D. White, the 2nd Armored Division's commander, feared his soldiers on the Elbe's east bank might be wiped out.

Close behind the 2nd Armored was Macon's 83rd Infantry Division, with its ever-growing menagerie of captured German vehicles hastily given a coat of olive drab paint and a white star to identify them as property of the US Army. Delighted news correspondents traveling with the division dubbed the outfit the "Rag-tag Circus." Macon's soldiers, who had been in combat almost constantly over the last 10 months, were not amused and insisted they be referred to by their official nickname, the Thunderbolt Division.

THE 83RD REACHED THE ELBE at Barby on April 13, just as the 2nd Armored Division's Magdeburg bridgehead started collapsing. In contrast to the 2nd Armored's tough fight downstream, crossing the river at Barby was easy for the 329th Infantry's two lead battalions, "just like a Sunday picnic with no fire of any kind," in the words of one participant. Colonel Edwin "Buckshot" Crabhill, the 329th's commander, exhorted his men to keep moving: "Don't waste the opportunity of a lifetime. You're on your way to Berlin."

In a short time, 83rd Division engineers established the Truman Bridge, a pontoon span across the Elbe, named in honor of the new US president Harry S. Truman (Roosevelt had died at Warm Springs, Georgia, on April 12). By the night of the 14th, both the 83rd and elements of the 2nd Armored were crossing. Simpson



had six divisions prepared to cross the river and his Ninth Army staff already had a plan "to enlarge the Elbe River bridgehead to include [the Berlin suburb of] Potsdam." With patrols less than 50 miles from the city, he was certain he could reach the German capital within 48 hours.

Dilemma on the Elbe

NOW THAT AMERICAN TROOPS WERE actually poised at the very threshold of Berlin, Eisenhower had to make a firm decision. After initially resigning himself to letting the Soviets take Hitler's capital, he had vacillated, encouraging Major General Alexander Bolling, commander of the Ninth Army's 84th Infantry Division, to "keep going...and don't let anybody stop you" before reaching Berlin. Now Ike decided conclusively to halt his hard-charging front lines at the Elbe.

all the way to Berlin

by Ken S. Mueller



On April 10, tanks and infantry of the Ninth Army's 84th Division fight their way into Hanover, some 180 miles from Berlin, passing dead German troops along the road. The Ninth Army was on track to reach Berlin swiftly, and Simpson believed his men could take the city with relatively few losses. But a decision had already been made farther up the command chain: the Soviets would capture Berlin.

level decisions that had already been made. On April 18, traveling toward the Elbe bridgehead with the 330th Infantry, which had been detached from the 83rd Division to mop up German resistance in the Harz Mountains, Bud Mueller wrote, "I hope this time we don't stop until we reach Berlin. The sooner we get there and finish them off the sooner this war will end." It wasn't long, however, before it became obvious that Berlin was no longer on the Ninth Army's agenda. Two weeks later, Mueller wrote home from the Barby sector that there was no longer any German shelling, so the infantry had challenged the medics to a softball game, and beat them 15 to 2. "The game was honest too," Mueller joked, "because the chaplain was umpiring."

Soon there came a transfer of power. The 330th Infantry Regiment's after-action report for May 5, 1945, records that "Russian forces began movement toward the Elbe River to assume control of the bridgehead occupied by the Division.... F and I

Companies, under the command of Major Allen, with orders to be out of the bridgehead by 0730 (6 May) remained..., awaiting the Russians." By 9:00 Elbe bridgehead was firmly in Soviet hands.

By May 1, German resistance along the Ninth Army's front had almost completely ceased. In their outposts along the Elbe River, Simpson and his men settled into a mission of occupation and military government. The shooting war was over, and despite the disappointment of having to hold back and allow the forces of another flag to conquer Hitler's capital, it was good to be alive, to daydream about going home—and to take pride in a hard-fought contribution to victory and peace. ★

KEN S. MUELLER, a Cold War-era army and marine veteran, is the son of the late Betty and Private First Class Kenneth G. "Bud" Mueller. A professor of history and political science, he resides in Lafayette, Indiana, with his wife and two sons.



The Elbe River at Barby, Germany, seen from the air on April 24, 1945, shows signs that the Yanks have arrived—pontoon bridges, and barges hauling in supplies. The Ninth Army's 83rd Division had reached Barby on the 13th, and crossed easily. Berlin, the Nazi German capital, only about 100 miles away, was the next stop on the Americans' itinerary—or so they thought.

DEATH IN *LIFE*

It took a plea to the president, but in September 1943 *Life* magazine was allowed to give Americans the first glimpse of US war dead.

The nation's leaders held their breath, awaiting the reaction.

by John M. Harris

THINGS WERE UGLY AT BUNA, GONA, AND SANANANDA, as ugly as they could be, and far beyond anything folks back home could ever imagine. There were thousands of dead and wounded on both sides—Australian and American attackers, and Japanese defenders holed up in beachheads around three seaside villages on the north coast of New Guinea's eastern Papua peninsula. Torrential rains prevented the Japanese from burying their dead, so they stacked the decomposing bodies in piles. The stench was so horrible that the men wore gas masks. Starving in the final stages of this battle that stretched from November 1942 into January 1943, the Japanese resorted to the unthinkable: eating the flesh of their dead comrades. But when the Allies finally overran the three villages in January, the Japanese refused to surrender. They dug into underground trenches, barricaded themselves behind pillboxes, and hid in trees, fighting to the death.

Into this hellish situation, alongside US troops fighting at Buna, walked a man armed only with a camera. He was *Life* photographer George Strock, whom Time-Life would later describe as a man “many consider the war's greatest combat photographer.” He was there to document reality for American civilians far removed from the war's front lines. The question was, would those civilians get to see the whole story? Or would they see only as much as an anxious federal government wanted them to?

Opposite: On September 20, 1943, Americans on the home front saw a brutal reality for the very first time. That day, *Life* magazine published this image by photographer George Strock, of three dead American GIs on the beach at Buna, New Guinea. Until then, government censors had forbidden publication of any image of US war dead.

PHOTO BY GEORGE STROCK. THE *LIFE* PICTURE COLLECTION. GETTY IMAGES





DEATH IN LIFE

by John M. Harris

cess under fire. "If you were going to a war zone and limited in what you could carry, you'd want to take superb cameras that were not likely to break down," remarked John Loengard, a *Life* photographer and editor. "In its class, there was no alternative but the Rollei."

Time to Show the Horror

As 1943 UNFOLDED, the war began to swing in the Allies' favor. American, British, and Free French forces overwhelmed German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's desert troops in North Africa. Americans and Australians under MacArthur's command began their island-by-island rollback of the Japanese in the South Pacific, and on the Eastern front, the Russians shattered Adolf Hitler's Wehrmacht at Stalingrad. A surge of hope, even confidence, replaced the despair, vulnerability, and fear prevalent among Americans at home in 1942.

But what seemed like a good thing worried federal officials. The government fretted that confidence might breed complacency. Suddenly, going on strike or leaving a war job might no longer seem unpatriotic to workers. And people might lose their commitment to wartime austerity and conservation efforts, or stop purchasing war bonds.

At this time Elmer Davis, the former CBS radio newscaster who directed the US Office of War Information, advised President Franklin D. Roosevelt that the government was shielding Americans from the war's reality for no good reason. Such overprotection, he warned, was creating public cynicism. Polls seemed to back him up: the proportion of Americans who believed that government news releases made the war look better than it really was had risen from 28 percent in July 1942 to 39 percent in June 1943.

THE ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION had initially withheld pictures of American dead for fear that the more people saw of war, the less likely they would be to support it. It was the same policy the government had followed throughout World War I. But now, Davis insisted, the country needed an explicit reminder that its boys were paying for America's freedom with their lives. Showing a photograph of US dead could bolster the public's will to keep fighting, while providing nothing of strategic value to the enemy.

Davis was adamant. After accepting responsibility for the OWI, he had pledged in December 1942 that his agency would "give the American people the fullest possible understanding of what this war is about" while also protecting military interests. Now he threatened to resign unless Roosevelt allowed the release of more graphic images, including those of dead soldiers.

Davis's insistence paid off. In September 1943, the government began releasing photos that presented a side of the war thus far unseen by the US public. One showed the bullet-riddled bodies of American paratroopers in Sicily. Another, taken in an African field hospital, focused on the stump of a soldier's freshly amputated leg.

The first photograph of a dead American to appear in the pages of *Life* was published in the August 2, 1943, issue in the article "First Pictures of Sicily Invasion." The photograph, by Bob Landry, showed a soldier standing to the side of a stretcher bearing a body completely covered by an army blanket. The caption read, "On the beach near Gela an American stands guard over a fallen comrade." But the blanket-covered form was hardly distin-

Japanese troops lie dead across the beach at Buna. US officials placed no restriction on photos of enemy war dead. Showing *American* dead, however, was forbidden for the first half of the war.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

DEATH IN LIFE

by John M. Harris

Life magazine dedicated 13 pages to Strock's photographs of the Battle of Buna in its February 15, 1943, issue. The 27 photos showed GIs sleeping, attending a religious service, digging foxholes, and patrolling the jungle and beach. One showed a soldier, his rifle raised, advancing into gunfire toward a Japanese field hospital. Strock had taken the picture on Japanese film he found after his own film got soaked. Five of the photos showed dead or wounded Japanese, including one in which an American soldier, pistol in hand, stood over a soldier he had just killed.

The most striking photo covered two facing pages. Headlined "This Is 'Maggot Beach,'" it showed the bloated bodies of Japanese soldiers in the sand and surf with a row of palm trees in the background. The caption explained that the soldiers had flung themselves into the sea after being routed from their positions and were either shot to death or drowned. Their bodies floated in the swells while maggots devoured them.

"[Strock's] pictures of the campaign, made under fire, reveal better than any previous set of pictures the heroism and the horror of this strange jungle war," *Life*'s editors wrote. Strock was beginning to earn a well-deserved reputation for his bravery and skill. *Life* ran an ad in newspapers extolling its photographers, and regarding Strock, it stated, "Few cameramen have risked their lives so often as did Strock in photographing the story, 'The Battle of Buna.'"

Readers responded to Strock's Buna photos with congratulations and appreciation for showing the reality of war. "I say give the public more pictures of this, regardless of what some people say about the horrors of war," wrote one. Another wrote, "I am sure that if most Americans realized what our boys are going through, they would take the war a lot more seriously than they do. We need to get fighting mad! The way to achieve that is to show us how our own men are suffering."

Missing from the discussion about showing the realities of the war, however, was the elephant in the room: no photographs published by *Life* or any other US magazine or newspaper showed dead Americans. Photojournalists were taking such photos. In fact, Strock had made a photograph of three dead Americans on the beach at Buna, but government censors had withheld it from the public, as they had all photos showing bodies of US soldiers. It was likely in storage at the Pentagon, where war photos deemed too graphic for the public were placed in a file War Department personnel called the "chamber of horrors."

Free Press on Military Turf

COMBAT PHOTOGRAPHERS HAD ACCESS TO the fighting front only through the US military, and that access came with rules and some heavy limitations. Each photojournalist joined up with or was assigned to a specific unit and was thereafter subject to the unit's

public affairs officer, as well as to the rules of the theater commander. The photographers had no say in how their film was used once they exposed it in their camera. They were required to turn in all the film they shot, either to be developed at the front by a US Army Signal Corps lab or to be sent to London or Washington, DC, for processing and examination by military censors.

Ralph Morse, *Life*'s youngest WWII photographer, explained how the process worked: The photographer would write caption information to accompany exposed film, tuck the paper and film into a condom to keep it dry, and give it to a public affairs officer, who would send it off to be processed. "You never saw what you had for any story," Morse said.

AFTER-THE-FACT CENSORSHIP gave combat photographers relative freedom to photograph what they wanted: shoot anything and see what gets past the censors. And public affairs officers, far from hindering the photographers from doing their job, facilitated it. They even offered tips on where the action was to take place and helped the photographers get to it.

War photographers, bound for the battlefield, needed courage and luck. As *Life* picture editor John Morris put it, "Writers could if they wished often cover such action seated in a pressroom with typewriters, and many did. Photographers had no such choice: they had to go see the show for themselves." Robert Capa, describing how he happened to be in position to shoot his dramatic frames of the Allied landing at Normandy on D-Day, explained it this way: "The war correspondent has his stake—his life—in his own hands and he can put it on this horse or that horse, or he can put it back in his pocket at the very last minute. I am a gambler. I decided to go in with Company E in the first wave."

Strock left no record of why he placed his stake on Buna and Lieutenant General Robert L. Eichelberger's US I Corps troops in late 1942.

He was in Australia when General Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander of Allied forces in the southwest Pacific, ordered the attack on New Guinea. Fellow photographer Myron Davis surmised that Strock simply heard about the order and went on his own, probably hitching a ride on an army plane headed for Port Moresby. Strock was known for making such forays, and the editors in New York often lost track of him. Once on New Guinea, Strock likely reported to a press officer, who may have informed him of the assault on Buna, or other correspondents may have filled him in. In any case, he would have had to take a flight over the Owen Stanley mountains to reach the front of this first American offensive entirely by plane.

Strock carried a Rolleiflex, a German-made camera that used square film, 2.25 by 2.25 inches. The Rollei was shaped like a half-gallon milk carton, but not quite as large. It was rugged, dependable, and simple to use, all of which were essential for suc-

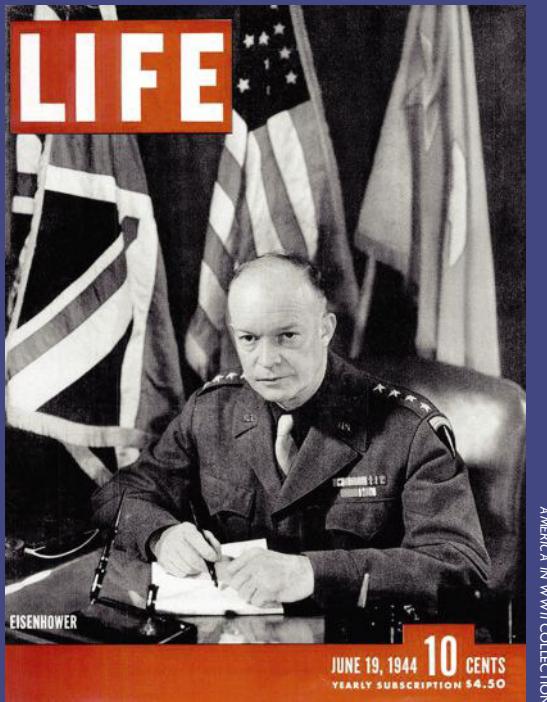






Photo: These kids gathered at Wiltz Castle in Luxembourg on December 5, 1944, hadn't enjoyed the traditional Christmastime visit from St. Nicholas in five years. Corporal Richard Brookins, a cryptographer with the US Army's 112th Infantry Regiment, fixed that, swapping his khakis for priest's vestments and a homemade miter to fill the role.

LIFE AT WAR



Dwight Eisenhower gets *Life*'s cover nearly two weeks after D-Day, the launch of his Normandy invasion.

WORLD WAR II MARKED THE BEGINNING of a golden age of photojournalism and war photography, and *Life* magazine was a driving force. *Life* prided itself on documenting the world visually—its photographers, at home and abroad, sent approximately 3,000 photos each week to editors in New York—and it covered the war extensively from the beginning.

Clare Booth Luce, Henry Luce's future wife, had suggested he buy the moribund humor magazine *Life* and transform it into a picture magazine. Luce launched the new version of *Life* in 1936, coinciding with the start of the Spanish Civil War. The magazine covered that conflict and, later, Japan's invasion of China. It published photographs showing a wounded baby wailing at a train station in Shanghai, the severed head of a Chinese soldier propped atop a barricade in Nanking, and a man carrying a dead child like a sack of potatoes. This was a new way of covering war, with images of citizen soldiers and women and children reacting to war's totality.

As military conflicts expanded across Europe and Asia, so did *Life*'s coverage. It deployed more photographers and artists during World War II than all the US newspapers combined, and it took great pride in them: "[N]ever before has the documentary record of war been set down with such fullness and clarity as is being done by the lenses of *Life*'s photographers," the magazine boasted in a 1943 advertisement.

Luce reflected, "Though we did not plan *Life* as a war magazine, it turned out that way."

JOHN M. HARRIS

guishable as a body.

Life finally published Strock's photograph of three dead Americans on the beach at Buna in its September 20, 1943, issue. The bodies were clearly discernible, though the soldiers were unidentifiable. Two lay face down. The third lay on his back, his face not visible. The tide had passed over them at least once since they had fallen. Sand partially covered the arm and leg of the man farthest up the beach, and the high-water mark was visible on his helmet. A line of palms in the background made it clear that Strock had taken the exposure near where he photographed the dead Japanese on "Maggot Beach."

Ralph Graves, a future managing editor of *Life*, saw the photograph for the first time while serving in the South Pacific during World War II. "There's nothing gruesome about Buna Beach," Graves said. "It is so unbelievably simple. And the bodies are different enough in their postures that it's interesting. That picture is so beautiful. First you look at it and think, Isn't that a lovely picture? And then you think, Yes, a lovely picture of death."

Public Reactions to Buna Beach

LIFE DID NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY to highlight its publication of Strock's photo—the first image of clearly visible American dead in World War II. The cover that week featured British professor Charles Theodore Seltman, a fellow in archaeology at Queens' College, Cambridge, with the cover blurb "Cambridge Don." The contents page included the statement that appeared in every wartime issue: "All photos and text concerning the armed forces have been reviewed and passed by a competent military or naval authority."

Strock's photograph filled page 35, a right-hand page in the Week's Events section. The opposite page featured three columns of type under the headline "Three Americans. Where these boys fell, a part of freedom fell: We must resurrect it in their name." The word "Editorial" was printed in the upper left corner above the text, to make clear this wasn't a news story. The editors wrote:

Here lie three Americans.

What shall we say of them? Shall we say that this is a noble sight? Shall we say that this is a fine thing, that they should give their lives for their country?

Or shall we say that this is too horrible to look at?

Why print this picture, anyway, of three American boys dead upon an alien shore? Is it to hurt people? To be morbid?

Those are not the reasons.

The reason is that words are never enough....

The text claimed not to justify the deaths, but it did just that, explaining in a literary flourish that these men had died to protect the American way of life—a highly romanticized way of life, as presented by the editors. "There is something lying on this beach that the camera doesn't show," they wrote. It did not capture the green meadows, the babbling brooks, a "stout, gray-haired woman pulling out of the oven an American apple pie." They went on:

America is the symbol of freedom.

It is the symbol, not only here at Buna, and not only at Guadalcanal, where the crosses crowd the shore; and not only in

DEATH IN LIFE

by John M. Harris

half-starved Sicily, and not only in trembling Rome: It is the symbol of freedom all over the earth, wherever men dream, or desire it....

Millions of Americans saw the photograph. *Life's* 1943 circulation exceeded four million, and the magazine asserted that it could have sold more copies if not for government restrictions on paper use. The photo and editorial resonated with *Life's* readers, and the magazine subsequently published a half dozen of their letters. "Three dead Americans on the beach at Buna" is the greatest picture that has come out of the war," wrote one. A worker on a Louisiana dredge reported he had posted the photo on a bulletin board and the number of employees participating in payroll deductions for war bonds had increased from 55 percent to 100 percent.

Not everyone shared such assessments. Photos of corpses made a mockery of the soldiers' sacrifice, wrote a New York City reader, and the government had made a mistake in permitting their lives to be held so cheap. "Life has erred even more seriously in editorially masking morbid sensationalism with talk about the necessity of arousing people to the meaning of war," she wrote. But she was in the minority, at least in the letters to the editor.

The publication of Strock's image had another impact: it changed the way combat photographers approached their work. "It made it a lot easier to cover the war, a helluva lot easier," said Ralph Morse. "Now you went out of your way to get dead Americans in the picture. It made for a different kind of journalism."

Strock after Buna Beach

STROCK ACCOMPANIED MARINES on the invasion of Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshall Islands in February 1944. He landed in front of a Japanese pillbox and was pinned down for half an hour behind a pile of coral. When the story ran in *Life* the next month, the lead photograph showed a marine dragging a clearly identifiable dead comrade out of the surf. The magazine's editors offered no rationale for running the photograph, nor any editorial comment on its political significance. Such was no longer necessary; images like this had already become an accepted part of America's vision of war.

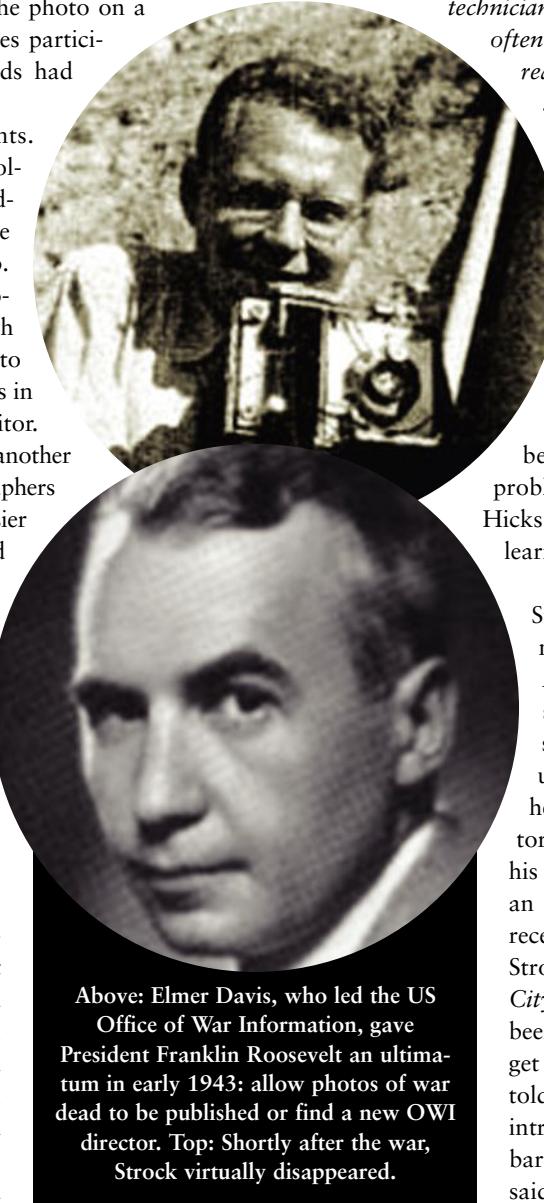
Life's records state that Strock remained on staff until 1944, but continued to shoot assignments into the late 1940s. His last cover shot for the magazine ran in October 1946, featuring starlet Gloria Grahame twirling her skirt and showing off her legs.

Despite a reputation as a brave and talented combat photographer, and despite the renown of the shot of the three dead Americans on Buna Beach, Strock is rarely listed in the pantheon of *Life's* famous photographers—Capa, Margaret Bourke-White,

Eugene Smith. In fact, he is largely forgotten, even by many of his colleagues. "Very little is known about Strock by any of us," Ralph Graves conceded.

The writer Loudon Wainwright Jr. noted that the impression that *Life* held all its photographers in high regard was false. Only a handful constituted a kind of aristocracy. He wrote,

[T]here were a lot of others who were less good—or less proficient at selling themselves. And these were considered by many to be slightly second-class, not as fancily educated or brought up as a lot of the editors, not as broad-gauge in their interests, technicians, really, clever with lights and electricity, often charming and brave, but—well, not really the kind of people you'd want to spend much time with.



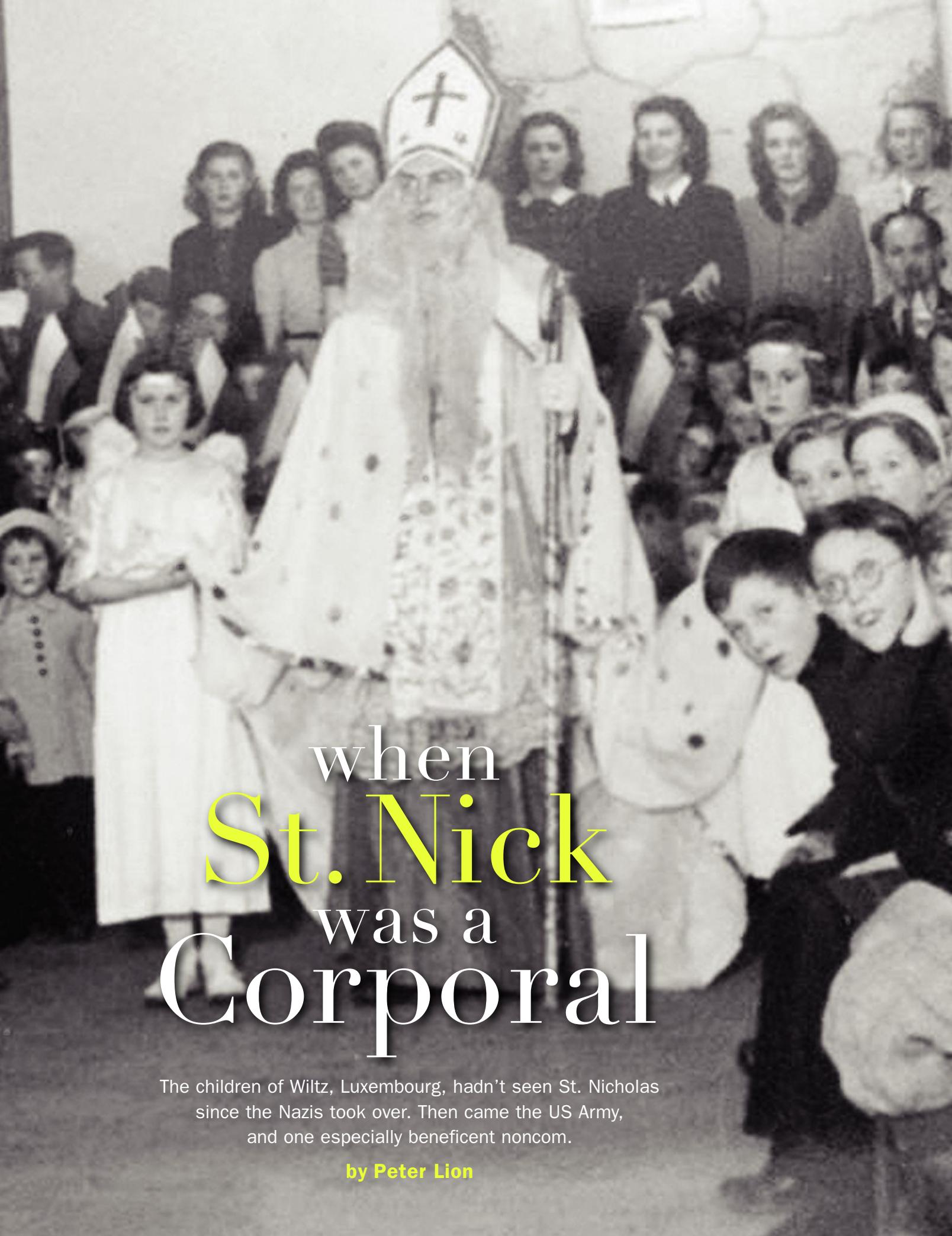
Above: Elmer Davis, who led the US Office of War Information, gave President Franklin Roosevelt an ultimatum in early 1943: allow photos of war dead to be published or find a new OWI director. Top: Shortly after the war, Strock virtually disappeared.

STROCK DEFINITELY FIT into this group. Part of it was his own fault. He was known as a hard drinker, which sometimes led to trouble. When *Life* assigned Myron Davis to cover MacArthur in Australia, he was told to smooth relations between the magazine and the general's staff. "One of your predecessors' behavior when drinking caused some problems," editor Wilson Hicks told him. Hicks did not offer a name, but Davis later learned it was Strock.

Life picture editor John Morris last saw Strock well after the war, when Strock met him at the airport in Phoenix, Arizona. Morris recounted to Strock a story that had become a classic at *Life*. It seemed Strock had once failed to show up in San Francisco to join a convoy headed to Australia, and none of his editors knew where to find him. He made it to his ship—barely—and sometime afterward an official of the Union Pacific Railroad received a letter of commendation from Strock regarding the bartender of the train *City of San Francisco*. The bartender had been able to do what the editors could not: get Strock to the convoy in time. "When I told this to Strock at the Phoenix airport, he introduced me to the man who had been the bartender, standing beside him," Morris said. "It was too much."

Life magazine's records show that Strock died in 1977. His hometown *Los Angeles Times*, for which he had worked early in his career, has no record of an obituary for him. But "Three Americans" lives on, regularly cited whenever the issue of showing dead soldiers is debated. ★

JOHN M. HARRIS is an associate professor of journalism at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington.



when St. Nick was a Corporal

The children of Wiltz, Luxembourg, hadn't seen St. Nicholas since the Nazis took over. Then came the US Army, and one especially beneficent noncom.

by Peter Lion



branches, thick undergrowth, spools of barbed wire, mines, mud, and decaying bodies. Foot trails were heavily mined, and the Germans, in control of the high ground, had carved pillboxes and machine-gun nests into the rolling hills overlooking roads and access points. The entire forest had been pre-sighted for artillery and mortars. US troops faced an uphill fight against an enemy that had had years to prepare its defenses and would tenaciously guard its homeland.

The 28th entered into battle at the start of November, fighting under brutal conditions, having had little sleep and no hot food, and suffering from dysentery and near epidemic trench foot. Finally the men were rotated out of combat, but not before two-thirds of them, some 6,000, had been wounded or killed. Exhausted and in tatters, the division was sent away for desperately needed R&R.

Brookins and his mates ended up in the storybook town of Wiltz, nestled in the foothills of the Ardennes and serving as the divisional headquarters. There he spent his days hunched over a SIGABA machine, the US Army version of the German Enigma machine, used to code and decode messages. He was also assigned the duty of division projectionist and often traveled to other units to show training films and Hollywood releases.

By now, on that day after work in November 1944, Stutz's and Brookins's coffees had grown cold. "For hundreds of years here in Wiltz, they had a celebration on the fifth of December, the eve of St. Nicholas Day," Stutz said. "A man dressed as St. Nick paraded through the town and gave candy to the kids. Kids here haven't cel-



brated St. Nicholas Day for nearly five years because of the war."

Finally Stutz came to the main point of the conversation: would Brookins play St. Nicholas? "No" was the quick response. Brookins realized that this celebration, especially with army brass behind it, was setting up to be a big event, and he feared he'd somehow botch up the proceedings, making the day memorable for the wrong reason. But Stutz persisted. "Well," Brookins explained later, "I could see he was in a bind and he was a friend..., so I eventually said 'yes.'"

BEING JEWISH, Stutz knew little about Christian holidays, especially one not widely celebrated in America. To find out more about St. Nicholas Day, he sought out the local Catholic priest, Father Victor Wolff, who filled in details. As for scheduling a time and place for a celebration, Wolff suggested Stutz speak with teachers at the public school, who, it turned out, couldn't believe GIs were arranging a St. Nicholas event for their children. All agreed that December 5, the day before St. Nicholas Day, would be the best time, and the courtyard of the centuries-old Wiltz Castle, near the center of town, the best place.

Shortly after 2 P.M. on the 5th, Brookins arrived at the castle in a jeep driven by Private Keith Burton. As planned, Brookins was greeted at the castle's convent by two nuns who had his St. Nicholas costume prepared, including flowing facial hair. "That was just a piece of frayed, heavy, gnarly rope that the nuns made into a beard," said Brookins.

M when St. Nick was a Corporal by Peter Lion

OST DAYS, Richard Brookins was a clean-shaven corporal dressed in US Army khaki and carrying a pencil. But December 5, 1944, was different. That afternoon, Brookins sat in the back of a jeep and rode through Wiltz, Luxembourg, sporting a long white beard (fashioned from pieces of old rope), wearing a priest's vestments and a homemade bishop's miter, and carrying a staff (fashioned together by tape).

Brookins, a 22-year-old cryptographer with the 28th Infantry Division's 112th Regiment, had reluctantly put on this outfit at the urging of his roommate, friend, and fellow corporal in the division's signal company, Harry Stutz. For a few hours that day, Brookins was St. Nicholas for the children of Wiltz. "I asked Harry, 'Well, what does St. Nicholas do?'" Brookins remembered. "And he said, 'Just walk around and let them see you. Pat them on the head and chuck 'em under the chin.' So that's what I did."

It sounded easy enough. Brookins never imagined the 4th-century bishop St. Nicholas of Myra would be the role of a lifetime. "We just wanted to do something nice for the kids," he said. But the role of a lifetime it was.

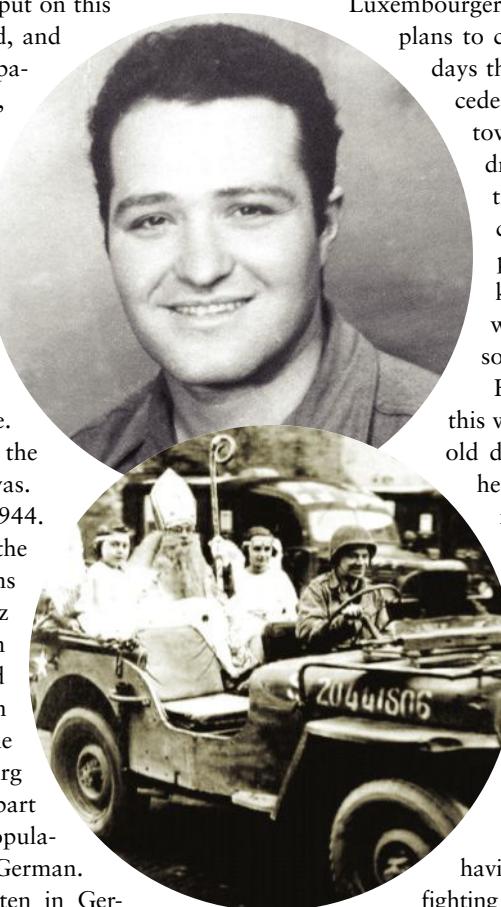
It all began shortly before Thanksgiving 1944. After an eight-hour cryptography shift in the signal company's message center, Brookins was pulled aside by Stutz. Over coffee, Stutz described what he knew about life in Luxembourg under Nazi rule, which he had gathered from conversations with Martin Schneider, a local he'd befriended. When the Germans invaded in May 1940, Luxembourg ceased to exist. The Germans considered it part of Germany and sought to Germanize the population. French surnames were changed to German. Official government documents were written in German. Luxembourgish, the native language, was outlawed. Streets were renamed to honor Nazi heroes. Holidays and customs not sanctioned by the ruling Nazis were illegal. All Luxembourg males 17 and older were conscripted into Germany's military and ordered to pledge an oath of loyalty to Adolf Hitler. Those who refused saw their families rounded up and sent to work camps in Germany.

Luxembourg rebelled against this oppression, and in August 1942, workers organized a general strike that brought the country to a standstill for days; the strike began in Wiltz. The German response was swift and deadly. The Gestapo rounded up organizers, including four well-respected teachers in Wiltz, and interrogated them. These men were put on trial, sent to the Hinzert concentration camp in Germany, and shot.

It was no surprise, then, that Luxembourg eagerly welcomed its American liberators in September 1944. As December approached, Luxembourgers, finally free to be themselves again, made plans to celebrate St. Nicholas Day, one of the holidays the Nazis had banned. St. Nicholas Day preceded Christmas by a few weeks and featured a town-wide celebration that focused on the children. Good boys and girls received candy and treats from St. Nicholas, while bad ones got coal. Wiltz, and the rest of the nation, prepared for the holiday as best they could, knowing that the ravages and shortages of war had left them with few material resources for celebrating the occasion.

Hearing the news of the celebration, and that this would be the first time Schneider's four-year-old daughter Martha would see St. Nicholas in her town, Stutz got an idea: he and the guys from the signal company message center would throw a Christmas party for the kids—a St. Nicholas party. He approached his sergeant, who sent the proposal up the chain of command. It went all the way to General Norman Cota, 28th Division commander. "Cota thought it would be great for PR," Stutz said, "and since none of the soldiers would be going home for Christmas, it would be good for them too."

The 28th Division needed a morale boost, having suffered punishing losses weeks earlier in fighting in the Hürtgen Forest. A 50-square-mile patch of dense, dark woods on the Belgian-German border, the forest was unlike anything the Americans could have imagined. Tightly packed pines and hardwoods towered 100 feet or more, blocking the sun even on rare clear days. Weeks of continual freezing rain and snow had turned the few logging roads into knee-deep mud flows, mostly impassable to vehicles, especially armor. Steep wooded ravines plunged to a forest floor webbed with downed trees,



ALL PHOTOS THIS STORY (UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED): NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Top: Harry Stutz came up with the idea to make Christmas 1944 special for the kids of Wiltz. Over coffee that November, he asked his fellow signal company worker Richard Brookins to play St. Nicholas. Above: Brookins was initially reluctant to be the focus of such an important event, but eventually gave in. On December 5, he dressed up and rode around Wiltz in a US Army jeep. Opposite, inset: Turnout could hardly have been better, thanks in part to the invitations delivered to every household in town. Opposite, top: In the courtyard of Wiltz Castle, Brookins is flanked by two schoolgirls dressed as angels. They remained with him through the day.

A WWII Scrapbook

LUCKIER THAN WE REALIZED

WE WERE DROPPED OFF at Cherbourg, France, by the British destroyer that had rescued us off the torpedoed SS *Léopoldville* [a Belgian ocean liner-turned-troopship, torpedoed and sunk by German submarine *U-486* on Christmas Eve 1944 while laden with US troops, 762 of whom were lost]. We were herded to a gymnasium to be evaluated.

Support people (Red Cross?) gave us pencil and paper to write home—"but don't tell them what happened," we were instructed. We wondered what happened to the rest of our people, left on the sinking ship. No way of knowing. [Made worse because the *Léopoldville* had embarked troops randomly, not by unit.]

Shifted to bivouac area and a pyramidal tent, my group "rescued" a box of rations from stacks a mile high. We opened a ration box, the first we had ever seen. "Let's try this dehydrated something," we said. I poured a little in a canteen cup. I put some water in the cup. Heated it. It overflowed, of course—a little dab would (and did) feed an army.

We were shifted around to get outfitted. Finally got an M-1 carbine, cosmoline and all [cosmoline is a thick brownish goop smeared on metal items before shipping, to prevent rust].

A motley crew, our 66th Division was finally trucked to Lorient. Where the hell is Lorient? Well, it turns out that when General George S. Patton broke out of the Normandy beachhead, he swept past Lorient and Saint-Nazaire. Grappling with



their defenses would have blunted his main effort to take a lot of ground quickly. So he left a "holding force" [the 94th Infantry Division] and moved on. When our bunch arrived on the scene, we took over and the holding force that Patton had left was shifted. Guess where? The Bulge—poor devils. [The Bulge was a huge pushed-back area in the US line in the Ardennes forest, where GIs battled fiercely to regain ground inch by inch.]

We, of course, did not know how lucky we were until later. After May 8, 1945 [Victory in Europe Day], that holding force came back to replace us. They had PFCs [privates first class] as platoon leaders, a corporal as company commander—it goes

on and on [a sign of horrific casualties]. The winds of war blow exceedingly bitter—for most, that is. We, it seemed, lucked out!

JOHN F. SIMON
wartime infantryman, Company D, 264th Infantry Regiment, 66th Infantry Division
Mason, Ohio

BEGINNING OF THE END, PART 2

In our last issue, we read how army message center chief Arthur S. Church found himself racing to the ringing teletype early on the morning of August 15. He and all his fellow soldiers on Saipan in the Mariana Islands were desperate for confirmation of a rumor that Japan had surrendered. Could this be that long-awaited message?

THE SEEMINGLY INTERMINABLE list of call letters began—AD, AA, BW, AN, FD, etc., and on and on until finally RD (us!):

"Official word received from SecNav [the secretary of the navy] that the war against Jap is concluded X Holiday routine on Saipan today Wednesday is directed X Congratulations all hands X"

So there it was. We cheered a little, slapped each other on the back a few times, and began to wonder how soon we would be going home. I told them all to take off and I would hold down the fort, but to be sure, someone came back at noon so that I could go to chow. I do not know if everyone got drunk or if there was some kind of celebration; I didn't hear the band playing "Yankee Doodle" or anything else.

Above: John Simon arrived in England in November 1944 with the 66th Infantry Division—the Black Panther Division. Top: On Christmas Eve the Panthers were headed across the English Channel to France aboard the SS *Léopoldville* when a U-boat crossed their path.

when St. Nick was a Corporal

by Peter Lion

Sitting in the rear of the jeep, Brookins was flanked by two angels played by schoolgirls. Burton pulled out of the castle courtyard and drove to the boys' school in the center of town. There St. Nick walked among the children, greeting eager, smiling faces. After a few minutes, the jeep was on the move again, leading a procession through the streets of Wiltz, so that all the children could see that St. Nick had returned to their town.

BACK AT THE CASTLE COURTYARD, all the town's children were gathered for the "Santa Claus Party," as the event was described on the invitations hand-delivered days earlier. Treats and candies donated by soldiers from their army rations, plus goodies they'd received from home, were put in paper bags and handed out to the children. Company cooks baked donuts and cookies, while nuns melted Hershey bars from the rations to make hot cocoa. There were songs, dances, poems, and tributes paid to St. Nicholas.

Brookins, now thoroughly embracing his role, was unaware of the photographer the US Army newspaper *Stars and Stripes* had

been sent to document the event. There also was a film crew from the US Army Signal Corps. The crew was returning to town from an assignment when the men spotted a jeep with what looked like Santa Claus riding in the back. Overcome by curiosity, they followed, and with film still remaining in their cameras, they rolled it to capture the event.

After the party ended, soldiers and townspeople returned to their daily tasks. For Brookins, that now meant temporary duty in Clervaux, about 20 miles north of Wiltz, where the 110th Infantry Regiment was headquartered. He was sent there to screen movies for GIs who were filtering through on R&R. He arrived in town on the evening of December 15 and planned to set up his equipment the following day. But fate intervened.

At 5 A.M. on December 16, Brookins was jolted awake by the explosions of German artillery raining down on Clervaux. He and others scrambled out of the hotel, trying to figure out what was happening. All around, bright flashes radiated in the thick mist that had settled into the valley. In the distance, between the booms of artillery rounds, the distinctive squeaking of operating tank

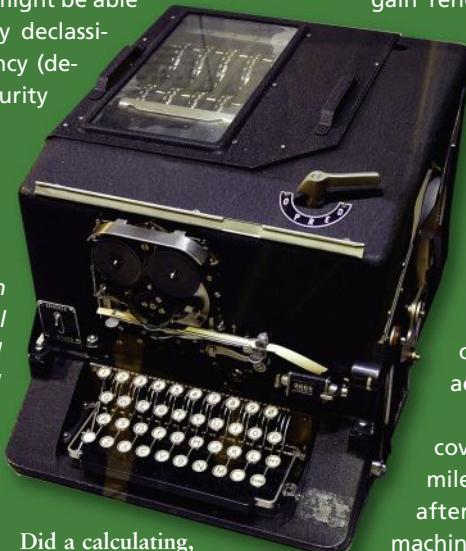
BELOW: US AIR FORCE

Classified Crime

One day in early 1945, all coded transmissions in the European theater came to an unexpected halt. A US Army SIGABA encoding machine had vanished and was assumed to be in enemy hands. That meant Germans might be able to decode intercepted messages. A recently declassified report from the National Security Agency (descended from World War II's Signal Security Agency) described the scenario:

On 4 February...the chief of the message center of the 28th Division's signal company departed from Kayersburg [Kaysersberg, France]...to set up a message center in Colmar.... (Unfortunately, though, the signal company's motor pool section, which had the responsibility for establishing a guarded truck park, had not yet arrived.) ...Subsequently, the truck (with SIGABA and associated equipment) was parked for the night in front of No. 20 Barbarossastrasse [Barbarossa Street], but without guards, as normally required. The next morning, when two officers went to the truck to make some repairs, it was gone.

The two men the report identifies as officers were actually Sergeant Teddy Hillman and Corporal Richard Brookins of the 112th Infantry Regiment. These men who worked in the message center of the 28th Division's signal company were there not to make repairs but to find wire to run from a generator into their apartment to power some lights. But the truck containing the SIGABA machine, its code wheels, and



Did a calculating, Nazi-aligned thief steal a US Army truck to get the SIGABA coding machine locked inside? Or was the crime simple auto theft?

its code keys—in three separate safes—was gone. "I couldn't believe that out of all those trucks [more than 50] parked on that street, they took that one," recalled Brookins, who would gain renown for having played St. Nicholas for the children of Wiltz, Luxembourg, two months earlier.

Brookins and Hillman initially thought the 2.5-ton truck had been moved overnight to a secured motor pool. Then, 45 minutes later, they discovered the truck's trailer abandoned on a dead-end road. But there was no sign of the truck. The news spread fast, and General Dwight Eisenhower, commander of Allied troops in Europe, ordered a theater-wide search, including aerial reconnaissance.

On the morning of March 9, US soldiers discovered the truck in a wooded area about 45 miles from where it had been disappeared. That afternoon, the safes containing the SIGABA machine and the code keys were found in a stream.

Ten days after that, the third safe, with the rotors, was found downstream.

Military investigators interviewed Brookins several times. "They brought me into a large room where I sat in a chair at one end of the room, with two MPs standing on either side of me, while at the other end of the room, at a long table, sat enough brass to start a band," he remembered.

Investigators determined that the safes had not been tampered with, concluding that the thieves didn't know what was inside and didn't try very hard to find out; the crime committed was simple auto theft.

PETER LION



Richard Brookins accepted invitations to return to Wiltz to reenact St. Nicholas Day Eve 1944 on more than one occasion. Here he is in 1977, dressed for the 30th anniversary of the original party much as he was back in the day. A pair of little angels is here again too.

treads could be heard, mingled with the crackle of small-arms fire and the occasional loud German voice. "We knew it was an attack of some sort, but just how big we had no idea," Brookins remembered. The Battle of the Bulge had begun.

As the day wore on, the Germans began closing in on Clervaux. Brookins managed to get out of town ahead of their advance and eventually hitched a ride to Wiltz in the back of a laundry truck. "When I got back, everyone wanted to know what I'd seen..., what was going on..., but I couldn't tell them anything beyond what they already knew because I hadn't seen anything," he remembered.

Days later, as the fighting intensified, Brookins and the rest of his regiment were ordered to fall back to the west to escape the German onslaught.

AFTER THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE, the 28th never returned to Wiltz; operational plans took them elsewhere. The memory of the special St. Nicholas Day faded. After the war, however, the people of Wiltz vowed to remember the kindness and generosity of the handful of GIs that day. From then on, their annual St. Nicholas festival incorporated new traditions: they re-created the procession through town, the party at the castle, and the bags of candies and treats distributed to the children. Most importantly, someone from the town was chosen to play the "American St. Nicholas."

For three decades, Wiltz faithfully re-created the 1944 event. Then, on the 30th anniversary of the postwar rebuilding of the town, organizers decided to do something big. For that year's St. Nicholas Day festival, they would try to find the GIs who started it all and invite them back. "I got a letter," Brookins said, "eight pages, on onion skin paper, meticulously written in Luxembourg-English, asking if I would come back and do it again. Imagine, they'd been doing this for thirty years, to honor us, and nobody knew about it."

With that, 56-year-old Richard Brookins returned to Wiltz in 1977 to play St. Nicholas for the children once again. Also there to witness and take part in the festivities was the man whose crazy idea started it all, Harry Stutz.

Throughout the years, Brookins, Stutz, and other GIs involved with the inaugural festival returned to Wiltz on many occasions. In 2004, Brookins reprised his role for the children for the last time. Age had caught up with him. In 2014, on the 70th anniversary of the American St. Nicholas in Wiltz, Brookins was there, riding in a jeep, waving to the crowd. St. Nicholas followed on a parade float right behind. Brookins summed up his thoughts in his typical understated manner: "I guess we did something that mattered." ★

PETER LION, a television producer and director with seven Emmy Awards to his credit, is the author of the 2003 book *American St. Nick*.

What I do remember is sitting there alone, no comings and goings, nothing to do at the time, [and] a feeling of depression came over me. I had been in this since 1942 and it seemed that the war that had begun with such fury had died with a whimper.

So I sat there, chain-smoking cigarettes (they were only 5 cents a pack), [until] the little bell on the teletype awakened me from my reverie.

After a few moments, my unseen comrade began with his usual listing of call numbers and letters. It began:

“Cease offensive operations against Japanese forces X Continue searches and patrols X Maintain defensive and internal security measures at highest level and beware of treachery or last moment attacks by enemy forces or individuals X”

It was finally over.

Everyone wanted to go home. We learned that a point system had been devised to determine who would go and in what order. Points were given for each year in service, each year overseas, combat credit, married, each child, etc. It was fair that men with a lot of combat experience should go first. I had only one battle star, one fogey [longevity bonus], a couple of Hershey bars [Overseas Service Bars, yellow sleeve stripes, one per year], no wife, no children, and no prospects for any.

I can't really remember what we did, business-wise, during the ensuing months. One way to pass the time was to take a hike, although now we called it a walk as

it was not organized and no one was in charge. There were a couple walks that I remember. I don't know that anyone knew where we were going, but I thought that if we took a main road and followed it, we would always get back to where we started. After all, it was an island.

We came to a cemetery with a gate proclaiming it to be the 27th Division Cemetery. I suggested that we go in, but no one else wanted to. I thought there might be a graves registry someplace that we could scan for names we might recognize.

They sauntered on and I went in alone. I walked along the rows of white crosses, reading the names. After a while the crosses ended and the markers became the Star of David. I continued along the row, reading the Jewish names, until I came again to crosses. On each cross was “Unknown.” I couldn't help thinking about the mothers and fathers, siblings, friends, sweethearts, wives—and babies who would never see their fathers. All these people waiting, probably having a “missing in action” telegram, but still holding out hope that these men were going to return. I stood with tears in my eyes, turned around, and left the cemetery, glad that I was alone.

[Around that time] we came to somebody's PX [post exchange—a store and canteen for military personnel]. As always, it was hot, so we decided to stop for beer and retired to some palm tree logs to seat ourselves. We lit up, always a preliminary to such conviviality, and one of the men had straddled the log. As we sat there chatting, telling tall tales about the worlds that we intended to conquer as soon as we got home, the man straddling the log began to poke at something in the dense undergrowth next to us.

To be continued...

ARTHUR S. CHURCH
wartime army message center chief
on Saipan, Marianas
Ukiah, California

1940s GI and civilian patter

bottled sunshine: a ration both covet and treasured—beer

dog show: they're ready for their close-up—feet inspection

army banjo: a deluxe accompaniment to foxhole-digging—a shovel

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Widowmaker Bombardier

by Bill Keller • edited and annotated by Mark Keller



ALL PHOTOS THIS STORY COURTESY OF MARK KELLER

WILMOTH LOWELL KELLER—Bill to everyone who knew him—was a Kansas farm boy through and through. He was, that is, until World War II.

Keller, born October 21, 1922, lived on his family's 40-acre farm outside Hiawatha, Kansas. The farm raised livestock for meat and grew soy, wheat, and corn as revenue-producing crops. Farm chores were a constant in Keller's life as a schoolboy, and in high school he added a job as a mechanic at a nearby garage.

Keller's responsibilities grew when his father suffered strokes related to being gassed when he was fighting in World War I. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Keller's father was too fragile to bear the news. The next day, he died from cardiac arrest after hearing President Franklin D. Roosevelt's declaration of war.

At the time of his dad's death, Keller was working as a riveter at a warplane factory. With US entry into the shooting war, he

tried to enlist, only to learn that his job made him ineligible. His work was labelled "war sensitive," necessary for the war effort. After more than a year of trying in vain to enlist, he petitioned his congressman for a waiver so he could finally join the military. Keller enlisted in the US Army Air Forces and reported to Childress Army Airfield in northern Texas on February 14, 1943.

Completing his training as a bombardier-navigator, Keller was commissioned a second lieutenant on December 24. He was assigned to Laredo Army Airfield in southern Texas from January to March 1944 for aerial-gunnery school. That April he transferred to Lake Charles Army Airfield in southern Louisiana for more training and flying time aboard Martin B-26 Marauder medium bombers, in preparation for overseas combat.

Flying the B-26 wasn't easy. The plane's short wingspan necessitated the high speed of 150 mph for takeoff and landing. Slower speeds caused the plane to lose lift, fall out of the air, and crash.

Above: Lieutenant Bill Keller (third from left) stands with the other men of his Martin B-26 Marauder bomber crew. A Kansas farm boy when the war broke out, Keller earned his wings as a navigator and bombardier. He'd spend the rest of his life working with aircraft and weapons.

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There were so many such instances that the B-26 was dubbed the Widowmaker. The plane's performance and reputation improved with aerodynamic modifications and better pilot training, and the plane ended up compiling a distinguished WWII combat record.

Keller flew 51 B-26 combat missions in Europe with the 496th Bomb Squadron of the 344th Bomb Group. Later in life, he said little about his war experiences. Fortunately, however, while he was an engineering student at the University of Nebraska after the war, he wrote about some of them in papers submitted as coursework. The text that follows is excerpted from those papers and has been lightly edited, with context and comments by Keller's youngest son, Mark Keller.

On July 3, 1944, I was in Goose Bay, Labrador [Canada]. I was on my way overseas to see combat duty as a Bombardier-Navigator on a B-26 aircraft.

At five o'clock on the morning of the 4th

★
I WAS THERE

certain that we had the right one. If we went up any other fjord, we would hit a dead end and crash. It was necessary to enter the fjord at 2,000 feet of altitude. The mountains on each side were approximately 8,000 feet high. The fjord was about two miles wide and a B-26 takes three miles to complete a 180-degree turn. Therefore, once in the fjord there was no going back: land or crash.

I got the maps necessary for the flight and computed the course I would fly. This was my first hop over the Atlantic Ocean. I was very uneasy as I realized my responsibility as a navigator.

Our crew took off about 7:00 A.M. I started my navigation log immediately. I found that I certainly had to work to keep up for we were traveling about 220 miles per hour.



Peace reigns in Germany's Saar Valley on Christmas Eve 1944. Moments later Keller dropped bombs on the Konz Karthaus bridge (one of three bridges shown here).

of July, I reported to briefing. During Briefing, the crews were shown moving pictures that were taken from the nose of an airplane approaching the airfield in Greenland. The briefing Officer stressed the approach we would make to the field. We were told that we would have to navigate our planes to a certain fjord, that before entering this fjord, we should make

When we arrived at the fjord, I was only two miles off course and one-half minute late on E.T.A. My pilot's confidence in my navigation was raised considerably for this was considered perfect navigation as the flight was over 900 miles of water. We had to fly up the fjord for 31 miles to B.W.-1 (the airfield) [short for Bluie West One, an airfield near Greenland's southern tip].

While flying up this fjord, we flew through snow. That was the first time I had seen snow falling on the 4th of July.

Greenland was very beautiful. The rugged mountains were capped with snow and ice. Down in the fjords, colorful flowers were growing along the water's edge. The water was a clear blue-green with large floating icebergs. One iceberg, 50 feet high, was just off the west end of the runway. On the east end of the runway there was a 5,000-foot glacier. Both the glacier and iceberg were a hazard to the planes landing or taking off.

The men stationed there said the fishing was excellent but unfortunately, I had to forego my favorite sport. The Flight Surgeon confined me to the hospital because I had a head cold. The next morning after some fast talking, I was finally permitted to leave and rejoin my crew.

We took off immediately for Meeks Field, Reykjavik, Iceland, which was 875 miles away. We landed at Meeks Field about 1400 hrs [2 P.M.] the fifth of July. We were grounded for three days because of the cold and misty weather. I was told that Iceland didn't get very cold in the winter; however, the wind velocity on some days, during the winter, will reach 120 miles per hour. I know that the houses had rock walls two feet thick. The Army huts were covered half way up with earth in order to keep the wind from blowing them down.

I was amazed when I was told about the heating system in Reykjavik (capital of Iceland). The homes in this city are heated by boiling springs in the mountains 60 miles away. The water in the springs is 212 F. and when piped into the homes the temperature is 210 F.

We left Iceland on July 8, 1944, bound for Prestwick, Scotland, and the business of war.

Flying Bomb Raids Out of France

In another paper, Keller recounted the 344th Bombardment Group's relocation to a captured German airfield at Pontoise, France, which the Americans renamed Station A-59. Upon arrival, the Yank airmen found that the Germans had left nothing of luxury or comfort for the new occupants.

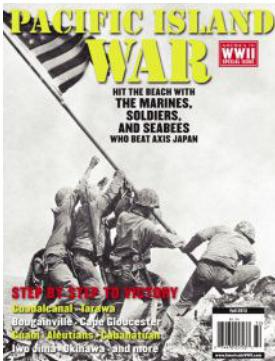
The 344th Bomb Group moved into Pontoise, France, on September 14, 1944, to establish a new base from which our

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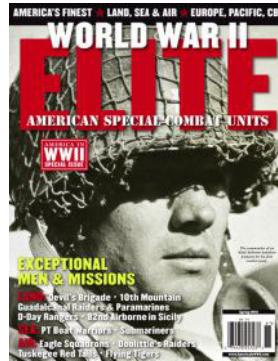
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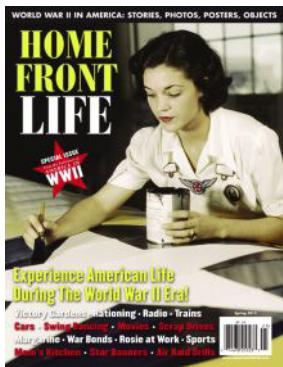
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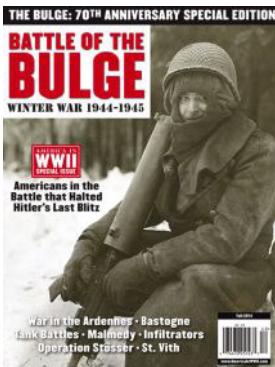
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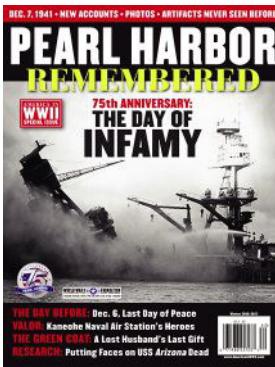
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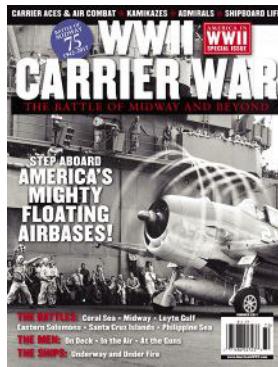
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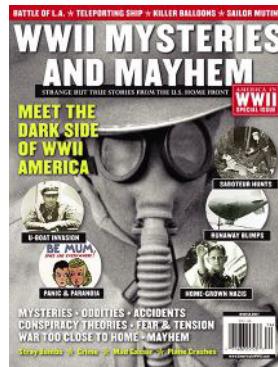
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bombers could fly. We lacked many of the necessities at this station such as: electrical equipment, lumber, cement and tar paper. I was asked to take a truck and a detail of men to a cave about 20 miles east of the base. This cave, I was told, contained electrical equipment and lumber. I expected to find an ordinary cave, but that was certainly not the case. A complete Focke-Wulf engine factory had been constructed by the Germans in this cavern; the factory was very interesting and extraordinary. [Focke-Wulf was a major German warplane manufacturer.]

It was about 0800 hrs [8 A.M.] when I was driving down the highway in a truck toward the cave. I was watching the road very closely because I was told the cave would be very hard to find, and the only thing I would be able to see was a narrow-gauge railroad crossing the highway and running up a small valley.

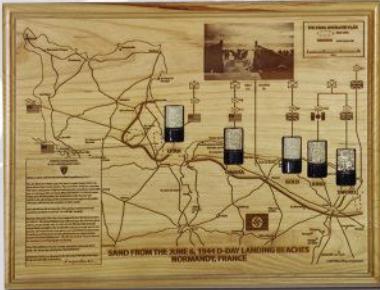
After a chilly ride, I saw the railroad track. I turned up a road that ran along the track. I had driven about a quarter of a mile when I saw ahead of me a valley completely covered over by a camouflage net. This net was made of coarsely woven netting, which had little green celluloid leaves tied onto it. The net was stretched between the hills that formed the valley about 20 feet above the road. I drove under the net approximately 1,000 yards to the entrance of the cave, which was 15 feet in diameter.

I drove the truck in and was amazed at the size of the interior. On my left, I noticed a large room that was lighted by electricity. A Frenchman was in this room. He was what I would call a caretaker. By gestures and a limited knowledge of French, I explained to him my mission. To my surprise, he understood me and very kindly volunteered to be my guide. He took me a mile down one of the forks that had packing crates all along the walls. I gathered that this was their warehouse.

We arrived at the end of the fork where great stacks of excellent lumber stood. We loaded on what we needed. The Frenchman took us into one of the other forks. In this fork were stores of electrical equip-

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Keller flew many missions aboard *Maxwell House II*—and *Maxwell House II 1/2*, after she was damaged and rebuilt. As bombardier he sat in the Plexiglas nose.

ment of every kind. I had the men load several crates of light bulbs and spools of electrical wiring; I also located a transformer which I returned later to pick up. By this time the truck was completely loaded, and I told the men they could look around for four hours. I cautioned them to be very careful as it was easy to get lost in a cavern of this size.

In one section, I found 20 or 30 Focke-Wulf 190 engines [for the Fw 190 single-seat Würger, or Shrike, fighter] that were

completed and ready for crating. In other sections, the Germans had shops of various types necessary to assemble aircraft engines.

I might mention at this point that we found records kept by the Germans stating that they had used slave labor in this underground factory.

When the American forces captured the cave, they interrupted the expanding program. In each fork were huge cranes, tractors and other equipment that were being used to enlarge it.

Just imagine a factory the size of Northrop Aircraft [in Hawthorne, California] under the ground and you will understand my reaction after seeing this masterpiece of engineering.

Christmas Present for Hitler

Keller said more about his time in Pontoise in another paper:

...On the afternoon of December 24, 1944, my pilot, Mc, went over to the operations tent to check the loading list. (A loading list is the schedule of the men and positions they will fly on the next mission.) He came back bursting with enthusiasm. He explained that our crew was leading the flight. This meant that I would be the lead bombardier and I would determine the bomb release point for the six-airplane formation. This was my first mission as Flight lead bombardier.

Pilot Bennie Mc (McSwain) and I went to bed very early that evening, as we would have to go to breakfast about three or four o'clock in the morning. We were awakened at four o'clock A.M. We dashed to the mess hall and ate breakfast, which

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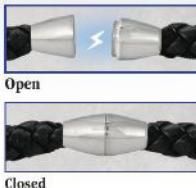
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bardier through the Norden Bombsight. I picked up the Konz Karthaus railway bridge south of Trier, Germany (the target) in my bombsight telescope. I set the cross hairs on the target and synchronized them on the bridge. I checked all the switches and lifted the trigger. I rechecked my synchronization and about that time the trigger dropped. The bombs were away!

I closed the bombay doors. I leaned over the sight and watched the bombs go down. It takes about 22 seconds for them to hit the ground from the altitude I was flying, 10,000 feet.

This is the first time I had seen the flak on this mission. It seemed like the Germans were throwing it all in my face. One piece went between my fingers, cutting my gloves.

The bombs hit the target. I had to take my earphones off for my gunners were yelling over the interphone with joy. I was very happy myself. No Christmas present had ever thrilled me so much.

I told the pilot, "It's OK to turn." And with that, we were on our way Home.

After the successful Konz mission, Second Lieutenants Keller and McSwain were promoted to first lieutenant.

Not every mission went off without a hitch. On January 14, 1944, the 496th Bomb Squadron was assigned to bomb the railway at Rinnthal in western Germany. Conditions were snowy on the runway at Pontoise, and Keller's plane—Maxwell House II, Good to the Last Drop, piloted by McSwain—slid off the runway due to a combination of instrument malfunction and slippery conditions. After repairs, the plane was renamed Maxwell House II 1/2.

A 'Borrowed' Generator and Friendly Fire

Although most of Keller's WWII stories took the form of college papers, he did mention a few experiences to his eldest son, Greg. One incident in April 1945 revolved around getting an electrical generator for the 344th to use at a captured German airbase, Florennes/Juzaine Airfield in Belgium, renamed Station A-78.

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amounted to a cup of coffee.

Mc had to go to the pilot's pre-briefing and I had to go to the bombardier's pre-briefing. At pre-briefing, we were given all the necessary information about the target and the route. The bombardiers are given pictures of the target and the data he needs; for example, elevation of target, barometric pressure, wind direction and velocity, and the calibrated indicated altitude from which the bombs will be released.

After pre-briefing, I had one half-hour before I had to report to briefing. During these 30 minutes, I computed my data for the Norden Bombsight [which gave the bombardier control of the plane on the approach to the target]. A bombardier has to compute the actual altitude in feet he will be above the target at the time of release, the drift angle and the dropping angle.

At six o'clock I reported to briefing, which every man flying the mission is required to attend. The briefing officer will tell everyone the route they will fly and other general information. When the time came for him to give the number of German anti-aircraft guns, or "flak," that we would encounter, we would all hold our breath. If

★
I WAS THERE

the number was small you would hear a sigh of relief; if not, you would hear a groan. This briefing there was an audible groan.

After briefing, we all went straight to our aircraft. I checked my bombsight in everyway. I also checked my bombs and bombays [common GI spelling of bomb bay]. I found my radio operator in the bombay with a piece of chalk, writing "a Christmas present for Hitler" on one of the 2,000-pound bombs. I wanted to be sure that everything was functioning properly, or the mission would be flown in vain.

We took off about 8:00 A.M. It was amazing to watch our group take off and form up.... In 18 minutes, 18 bomb-laden B-26s would take off and be over the field in formation.

On the way to the I.P., I navigated the aircraft and set all necessary data in the bombsight. [I.P. is Initial Point, an identifiable spot about 20 miles from the target, where the

bomber began a straight, steady flight with its bomb bay doors open, with the bombardier flying the plane through the bombsight, ready to bomb.] I loaded my nose gun and gave the time that the gunners would test-fire their .50-caliber guns in anticipation of enemy fighters. This was done before we reached enemy territory. When we crossed into enemy territory, I called the crew over interphone and told them it was time to don their flak suits. A flak suit is a vest with a lining constructed of little pieces of steel fastened together in the same fashion as shingles on a roof. This suit will stop some shrapnel, not all. A vest could be the difference between life and death!

As we were coming up on the I.P., I began to get nervous. I couldn't miss this target!!

When we reached the I.P. I rolled my bombsight around till I had the right amount of drift in it. Then I called the pilot and told him the heading to fly. The heading is the direction the aircraft is pointed.

When I was about four miles from the target, I called "on course." This meant the pilot would follow the pilot's directional indicator, which is controlled by the bom-

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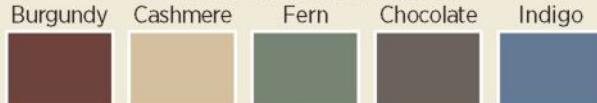
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At A-78, there was no electricity to light buildings or cook, and there was no heat, so the American airmen desperately needed a generator. Visiting a nearby Belgium army camp one day, Keller decided the Belgians had one more generator than they really needed. So he took that generator. He managed to spirit it away, and with the knowledge of electricity he had gained on his family's farm, he hooked it up and illuminated Station A-78.

Somehow, the Belgians figured out where their generator had gone, and Keller started getting questions about it from higher-ups. Soon, those queries turned into

★
I WAS THERE

bombs were more plentiful, planes would simply drop their bombs over the English Channel on the way home, rather than risk landing with 4,000 pounds of bombs on board.

There were other reasons why planes might jettison their bombs, and on December 10, 1944, Dad ran into one of them. That day, two flights of bombers [two por-



B-26 pilot Lieutenant Bennie McSwain (rear, center) smiles with his crew in October 1944 at Pontoise, France. Keller is beside him, on the right.

orders: return the generator. Keller claimed an order even arrived from Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight Eisenhower. Keller stalled, however, and the 344th managed to hang on to the generator—and the electricity it provided—until the unit moved into Germany.

As the youngest of Bill Keller's children, I wasn't privileged to hear as many of Dad's stories of wartime adventures and grief. But I recall him telling me about an incident involving the disposal of undropped bombs. He explained to me that sometimes the weather on a bomb mission was so bad that there was no way to drop the bombs on the target. In most of those instances, especially later in the war when

tions of a squadron] were dispatched to a target inside Germany, and Dad and McSwain's B-26 was the lead plane in one of those flights. When the lead plane of the other flight was hit by enemy fire and quickly dumped its bombs, protocol dictated that all the other planes in the flight should drop their bombs over the same zone. Most did. But Dad held his bombs, and instructed his flight to do so, too. A declassified squadron history tells why:

...The target of 10 December was a heavily defended area at Birkisof. Enroute to the target the lead ship was hit, which necessitated the salvoing of the unused bombs. Unfortunately, these bombs would

be later determined to have been salvoed in friendly territory. The rest of the box as ordered, bombed on the lead ship's release.

However, Lt. Keller, lead bombardier for our flight, believing the formation to be behind the bombline, held his bombs along with his other three planes in the squadron.

A Farewell to Arms—Almost

After the war ended with the surrender of Nazi Germany in May 1945 and Imperial Japan that September, Dad remained in the service, waiting to earn enough points for discharge under the military's Advanced Service Rating Score system. He ended his service flying aboard Boeing B-29 Superfortress heavy bombers in the 340th Bombardment Squadron of the 97th Bombardment Group, stationed at Smoky Hill Army Air Field in Salina, Kansas.

In June 1947, Dad was part of a delegation from the 340th Squadron sent to Germany and England on a goodwill mission. While in England, he was selected to appear in a televised BBC interview. He later wrote about the experience in one of his college papers.

After leaving the service at the end of September 1947, Dad stuck with airplanes instead of going back to farming. The mechanical engineering degree he earned, coupled with his wartime aviation experience, won him a job with Boeing in Florida. He spent many hours aboard warplanes out over the Gulf of Mexico, designing and testing the fire-control system for launching missiles and bombs (something about which my mother, Patricia Owens Keller, wasn't particularly happy). Later, Dad worked for General Dynamics in San Diego and then Pomona, California, as head of the weapons test and analysis department. He worked on many weapons in use today, including the portable surface-to-air Stinger missile, the surface-to-air RAM (Rolling Airframe Missile), the Standard shipborne guided missile, and the F-16 Fighting Falcon supersonic fighter. Dad also served in the US Air Force Reserve until 1968, finishing as a lieutenant colonel.

Unfortunately, Dad had a short life, dying in 1975 in Upland, California, where he had raised his family. ★

MARK KELLER, son of Bill Keller, lives in Yucaipa, California.

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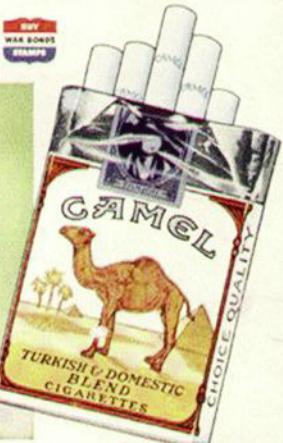
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lant encounter. Dallek also writes about those who ranged somewhere between imperious and impotent the weak but wily Chinese leaders Chiang Kai shek and Madame Chiang, who already wielded great popular esteem in America and sought to use that to exert leverage on US policy, straining the patience of even a long time Sinophile such as Roosevelt. In all interactions with world leaders, Roosevelt dealt with immediate issues yet never lost sight of his long term goals for America and the world.

A striking theme in Dallek's book is Roosevelt's difficulty maintaining attachments to anyone or anything. This is obvious with his marriage, but throughout the book, we see aides disappointed and discarded; vice presidents regularly replaced; allies, like Churchill, sacrificed in hopes of winning over Stalin; and entire nations, like Poland, abandoned. One can easily understand Harry Truman's comment that FDR was the coldest man he had ever met.

A full "political life" of Roosevelt would

be a psychological exploration of his evolving political thinking and the development of his characteristics of charm, deflection, detachment, delay, vacillation, and concealment. In this rewarding, concise, and well-written book, Robert Dallek explores Roosevelt's style of politics and its implementation, and he discusses its early manifestations as well as anyone can. One paradox of this supremely transformative president is that no other WWII leader had such confused thinking or such a precise and consistent vision for the world. Desiring merely to conquer the world, as Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Emperor Hirohito did, was pedestrian. Planning to reshape its form and values, as Franklin Roosevelt did, was visionary.

THOMAS MULLEN
Flemington, New Jersey

Hitler in Los Angeles: How Jews Foiled Nazi Plots against Hollywood and America

by Steven J. Ross, Bloomsbury Press, 432 pages, \$30

“ON APRIL 27, 1939, Warner Brothers declared war on Germany,” Steven J. Ross announces. Ignoring German protests that the film was biased, the studio released *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, a ripped-from-the-headlines thriller starring Edward G. Robinson. This premiere marked the start of open hostilities between Hollywood and Berlin—but, Ross argues, that war had long been underway.

“For Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, no American city was more important to the cause than Los Angeles, home to what he deemed the world’s greatest propaganda machine, Hollywood.... Goebbels and Adolf Hitler had one thing in common with Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin: they saw Hollywood as central to

★ THEATER OF WAR

The Pacific

HBO, 10 episodes, 2010

AS WE CELEBRATE the 2017 holiday season, we can be thankful for the US Marines of the 1st Division and countless other Americans and Allied personnel who fought and won the six-month battle for Guadalcanal 75 years ago. The Japanese fought hard to keep this primitive island in the Solomons, scooped up in their initial sweep of the Pacific Rim. They realized a toehold by the Allies in any of the conquered areas would mean enemy landing strips. Airfields like those on Guadalcanal would give the Allies the strategic initiative and play a large part in their eventual victory in the Pacific war.

The 2010 HBO miniseries *The Pacific* portrays in gritty, gripping detail the hard-fought Guadalcanal campaign and other campaigns that followed over the next three years. Capitalizing on critical and popular acceptance of HBO's *Band of Brothers*, executive producers Steven

Spielberg and Tom Hanks sought to bring the same style of personal war drama to the Pacific theater, where the marines were the most visible, though certainly not the only, Allied force to oppose the Empire of Japan. *The Pacific* dramatizes the wartime experiences of actual 1st Division marines.

The Pacific's narrative is based, in part, on the writings of two leathernecks who chronicled their experiences: Robert Leckie, author of *Helmet for My Pillow*, and Eugene Sledge, author of *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa*. They appear in all episodes of the series. Another major character is Medal of Honor recipient John Basilone, whose bravery and dedication exemplify what the marines are known for. As these three grapple with personal challenges, they do so in the company of comrades and commanders who share life in the mean jungles of Guadalcanal and New Britain, the hellish island fortresses of Peleliu and Iwo Jima, and the final Japanese bastion of Okinawa. The situations offer frequent opportunities for the talented ensemble cast to

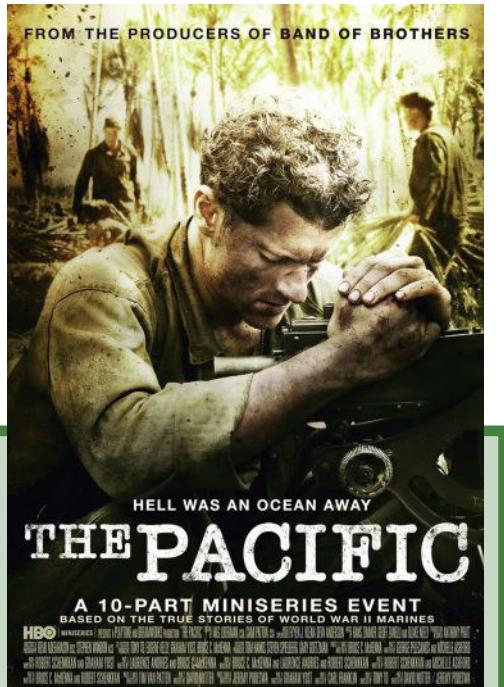
interact with a range of emotions.

The 10 episodes chronologically follow the war in the Pacific. The characters are introduced in their homes and at their military departure points after America's entry into the war, then the first episode fast-forwards to the Guadalcanal landing. The war and the oft-repeated phrase “Kill Them All” become reality for the marines. The fanaticism displayed by the Japanese in the first big action on Guadalcanal's Tenaru River seems to confirm the marines' preconceptions. But after examining the personal effects of some of the Japanese dead, Leckie writes home that “we have met the enemy and have learned nothing more about him.” The scripting of *The Pacific* is wonderful, originating as it does from the impressions of those who experienced it.

The other episodes continue the Guadalcanal campaign; the 1st Marine Division's journey to Melbourne, Australia, for rest and refitting; and the Cape Gloucester landing. The 1st Marines prepare for their next campaign on Pavuvu, then head for the desperate

their efforts to win over the American public and the world to their cause.... American films were eagerly watched throughout Europe, Latin America, and Asia; if properly controlled, they could help advance Germany's quest for world domination. While Reds tried to control Hollywood through infiltration, Nazis planned to do it through intimidation and murder."

In Hitler in Los Angeles: How Jews Foiled Nazi Plots against Hollywood and



Peleliu fight. Meanwhile, Basilone, because of his fame at Guadalcanal, is sent home for a war bond drive. His discomfort about being away from the front eventually leads him back to the Pacific, this time with the 5th Marine Division at Iwo Jima. The 1st Marines then fight one of the final actions of the war, at Okinawa. The series ends with the journey home, and the postwar lives and memories of the featured characters.

The series has been billed as *The Pacific*, Season 1. Though no word has since surfaced about a second season, it would be a welcome contribution to WWII television for this well-written and well-executed production to continue someday.

JAY WERTZ
Phillips Ranch, California

America, Ross maps the skirmishes of a covert war. He documents how Jewish groups monitored Nazi plotters in prewar Los Angeles and aided the FBI after the war began.

The hero of this book is Leon Lewis—"the most dangerous Jew in Los Angeles," one hard-bitten Nazi declared. Lewis worked in Hollywood for the Anti-Defamation League, lobbying against anti-Semitism in the film industry. Behind the scenes, he organized agents who infiltrated anti-Semitic groups in Southern California. These included the Friends of New Germany (Nazis backed and secretly funded by Germany), immigrant storm troopers with half-baked plans to seize National Guard armories, and a host of homegrown fascist brotherhoods: the Ku Klux Klan, the Silver Shirts, the American Labor Party, and the American White Guardsman.

Through the 1930s, Lewis's agents reported ugly, crazy talk. There were plots to kill celebrities, to kidnap and hang 20 prominent civic leaders, to spray Jewish neighborhoods with machine-gun fire, even to kill Jews with poisoned needles shot from a fountain pen. On a different front, Lewis could watch the very public efforts of German diplomats to influence how Hollywood portrayed the Nazi regime. The German consul in Los Angeles, Georg Gyssling, had been charged with stopping production on films that defamed Nazi Germany.

As the United States moved toward war, the tenor of Nazi activity changed. Rather than undisciplined local extremists, Lewis encountered serious spies and inquisitive would-be saboteurs. One of his undercover sources, Charles Slocombe, wormed his way into the confidence of German agents overseen by a spymaster known as Count Ernst Ulrich von Bülow, who asked about minefields and harbor defenses. (For Lewis and the Anti-Defamation League, Slocombe proved an unlikely but reliable ally—a Klansman who hated communists, but not Jews.)

Another of Lewis's men, Neil Ness, testified for the House Un-American Activities Committee that German agents found it easy to enter the United States through loosely guarded ports on the West Coast. "Playing up the threat of a hundred Nazis poised to blow up docks, aircraft factories,

and waterworks," Ross sums up, "newspaper headlines across the United States and Canada reported Ness's warning about Nazi plans for espionage and sabotage."

After Pearl Harbor, Lewis worked closely with the FBI. The evidence in his files supported deportation proceedings and criminal charges (trials for sedition and conspiracy) that kept enemy sympathizers in jail throughout the war. "By early March [1942] the once lively Nazi headquarters on the corner of West Fifteenth Street and Figueroa had gone virtually dark," Ross writes.

Nazis were not the only foes caught up in Lewis's net. Two British operatives, expelled for operating without US State Department approval, had given his office a list of Japanese operatives in the United States—material that Lewis handed over to federal agents. Nor was Lewis the FBI's only source on German undercover action. Secretly, Georg Gyssling loathed the regime he served, so fiercely that he befriended Austrian-born journalist-turned-film producer Julius Klein. What Gyssling told Klein, Klein relayed to an officer he had met in the Illinois National Guard, George Catlett Marshall.

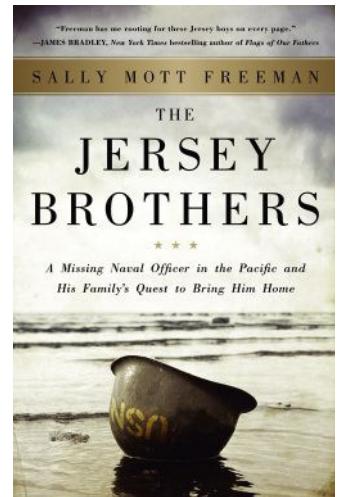
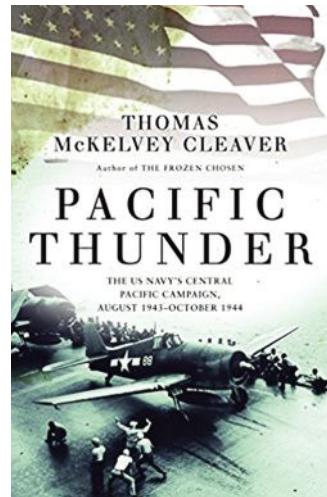
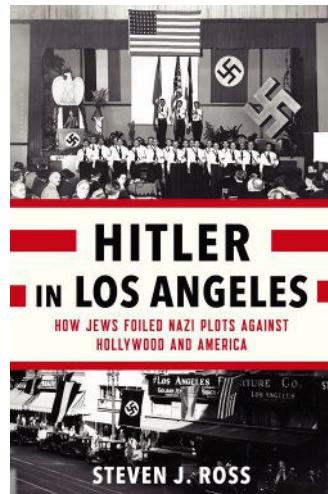
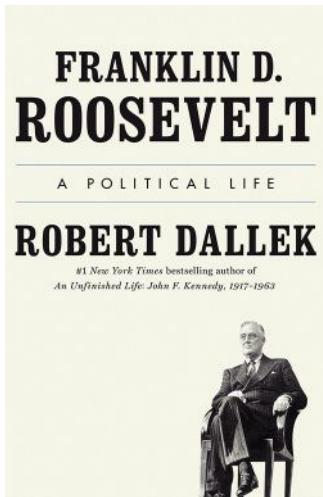
Hitler in Los Angeles is dense with detail, which Ross marshals ably. Partly written to contest claims that Jewish filmmakers colluded with Hitler and Goebbels—in particular, claims made by historian Ben Urwand in *The Collaboration: Hollywood's Pact with Hitler*—Ross's narrative pans slowly across a disturbing landscape. It holds its own with those films that chronicle the dark, forgotten history of Southern California.

ALLEN D. BOYER
Staten Island, New York

Pacific Thunder: The US Navy's Central Pacific Campaign, August 1943–October 1944
by Thomas McKelvey Cleaver,
Osprey Publishing, 296 pages, \$35

IN *PACIFIC THUNDER*, author Thomas McKelvey Cleaver covers the trail blazed by the US Navy through the Central Pacific, proving that an old dog can learn plenty of new tricks.

At the beginning of 1942 the US Navy



Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Political Life
by Robert Dallek, Viking, 704 pages, \$40

THE GREAT MYSTERY of Franklin Roosevelt is that he was ever great, with odds so strongly stacked against him: a controlling mother, a dominating uncle (Teddy), an upper-crust upbringing, and wealth that insulated him from any financial struggle. Yet below his privileged surface, something strange kindled, a driving instinct for calculating human nature and concealing intention, and this mysterious force propelled him to the apex of political power, where he wielded nations and armies as casually as we play checkers. Haphazard in finance and unsuccessful in fighting unemployment, he was a five-star, barn-burner mastermind in politics. Robert Dallek's newest political biography follows the growth of Roosevelt's unique political manner, focusing on his experience leading the nation in the 1930s and leading the world in the 1940s.

The early Great Depression was the period of Roosevelt's ascendancy. Standing in the ruins of Herbert Hoover's well-intentioned failures, he understood that mere policy would not suffice to restore national hope. This insight underlay his unprecedented attitude toward politics, which consistently emphasized rhetoric, inspiration, and image. This was evident

from his smiling, jaunty ride with a gloomy Hoover to the inauguration, to his Fireside Chats, to his impromptu commitment of the Allies to the unconditional surrender of the Axis.

Dallek provides numerous examples of FDR's improvisatory technique in politics, such as his frequent changes of choices for vice presidential candidates and his directing an aide to combine two completely contradictory approaches to protectionism in a single speech. Like many other politicians, Roosevelt never let facts or consistency get in the way of a good tactic. Dallek recognizes this and finds himself relying on the inspirational value of FDR's initiatives rather than on their actual, tangible success—or lack thereof; through FDR's first eight years as president, unemployment never dipped below 14 percent and national recovery remained elusive.

In other cases FDR's mastery of the *calculated* gesture was genuinely successful, as it was during a march of WWI veterans seeking early payment of a promised bonus. In a similar march in 1932, Hoover had sent in the army; FDR instead accommodated the marchers with food, coffee, a convention tent, and a visit from his wife. Most of the marchers soon took work with the Civilian Conservation Corps, established by the federal government to provide jobs for the unemployed. FDR's affa-

ble deflections from troublesome issues had few peers then or now.

While Roosevelt reigned supreme at home, abroad he dealt with peers who might or might not cooperate. Among these, Great Britain was America's closest wartime partner. Though the relationship between Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill was historic and vital for the war, little overt force or influence was needed, since both recognized the necessity of thwarting the Third Reich. Even so, their dynamic was complex, marked by an explicit ascendancy of America over Great Britain.

Collaborating with Soviet Premier Josef Stalin was only more complicated. By this stage in life, Roosevelt had developed skills in one-on-one manipulation, domination, and persuasion that were unexcelled. But the grim Soviet warlord was unaccustomed to compromise with equals and was immune to Roosevelt's charisma, even when Roosevelt courted him at Churchill's expense. Their serious discussions, especially about Poland and the Eastern European countries, were seldom collegial or congenial.

Dallek ventures to the other side of the power spectrum as well. He looks at essentially impotent figures, such as France's Charles de Gaulle, who made endless demands but offered little in exchange, invariably vexing Roosevelt in each petu-

CALIFORNIA • Dec. 2, Chino: Living History Flying Day—A6M5 Zero. A panel of veterans, military experts, and aviation historian Kevin Thompson will discuss the Mitsubishi fighter. Flight demonstrations, question-and-answer session. 10 A.M.–noon. Planes of Fame Air Museum. 909-597-3722. www.planesoffame.org

Thursdays through Dec. 14, Richmond: Blossoms and Thorns, a Community Uprooted. Documentary screening and program on the experience of Japanese Americans in California during World War II. Presented by a Japanese American Citizens League representative and a National Park Service ranger. 2 P.M. Rosie the Riveter Visitor Education Center. 510-232-5050, ext. 0. www.nps.gov/rori

COLORADO • Dec. 2, Denver: 8th Annual 1940s White Christmas Ball. Live period music, reenactments of scenes from the 1954 movie *White Christmas*, sleigh rides, WWII military vehicle displays, living history. Period dress encouraged. Presented by the not-for-profit organization 1940s Ball. 5 P.M. Hyatt Regency Downtown Denver Convention Center. 720-924-1945. www.1940sball.org

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA • Nov. 16: What Did Faith Communities Stand For? Doctrine and Deed in Nazi Europe. Lecture on faith leaders' and religious communities' responses to Germany's Nazi regime. Presented by Rebecca Carter-Chand, Matthew Hockenos, and Kevin Spicer. 7 P.M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 202-314-7877. www.ushmm.org

HAWAII • Dec. 6, Honolulu: Blackened Canteen Ceremony. Annual ceremony of reconciliation at the USS *Arizona* Memorial in tribute to the casualties of the 1941 Pearl Harbor attack. Conducted by Dr. Hiroya Sugano, director general of the Zero Fighter Admirer's Club of Japan. Hosted by the Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor. 7 A.M. USS *Arizona* Memorial. 808-282-6570. www.pearlharborhistoricsites.org

Dec. 7, Waikiki: Pearl Harbor Memorial Parade. Floats, bands, and military helicopters parade through Waikiki to honor Pearl Harbor casualties and survivors, and all other veterans. 6 P.M. Fort DeRussy Military Reservation. 808-955-9552. www.pearlharborhistoricsites.org

LOUISIANA • Nov. 10, New Orleans: Victory Ball: Celebrating Those Who Serve. Reception and dance with live WWII-era music in honor of US veterans and active service members. Service uniform or 1940s dress encouraged. 6–9 P.M. The National WWII Museum. 504-528-1944 ext. 334. www.victory-ball.org

Nov. 16–18, New Orleans: 10th International Conference on World War II. Historians and authors offer presentations on World War II's history and impact. Includes a day-long symposium on Adolf Hitler. Presented by the Pritzker Military Museum and Library. 8 A.M.–4 P.M. US Freedom Pavilion, National WWII Museum and Hyatt Regency New Orleans Hotel. 877-813-3329, ext. 511. www.ww2conference.com

MISSOURI • Nov. 13, St. Louis: American Eyewitnesses to War: POWs and Liberators. Program on the wartime diary of Combat Medic Anthony Acavedo by museum curator Kyra Schustor. Presented in connection with the National Holocaust Memorial Museum. 7–8:30 P.M. St. Louis County Library Headquarters. 314-994-3300. www.slcl.org

TEXAS • Nov. 11, Sweetwater: Fifinella 5K Run for the WASP. Benefits the National WASP WWII Museum, commemorating the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II. 8 A.M. National WASP WWII Museum. 325-235-0099. www.waspmuseum.org

Please call the numbers provided or visit websites to check on dates, times, locations, and other information before planning trips.

COMING SOON



Prison guards search for German escapees in the desert near Arizona's Camp Papago.

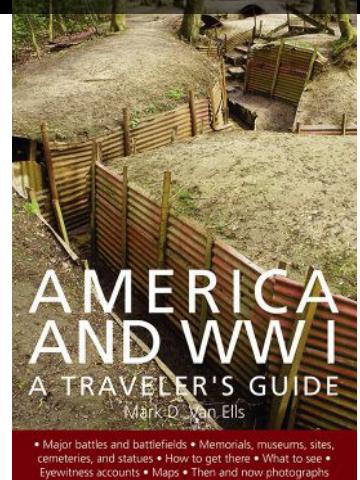
U-BOATERS ON THE MESA

Two dozen POWs dug a tunnel to escape prison. Now they were loose near Phoenix.

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was clearly outclassed by the Imperial Japanese Navy. Cleaver takes the reader from those dark days through the end of the war, detailing the changes in tactics, hardware, and training that eventually led the Americans to dominate the Japanese in the latter part of the Pacific war.

Pacific Thunder covers the Central Pacific campaign, but it does so with a focus on naval aviation; indeed, Pearl Harbor proved that aircraft carriers were the new force to be reckoned with on the high seas. Cleaver knows his subject: the naval air war in the Pacific is one he has visited before, in *F4F and F6F Hellcat Aces of VF-2* (2015) and *Fabled Fifteen: The Pacific War Saga of Carrier Air Group 15* (2014). His love for and knowledge of American naval aviation is evident in his latest book.

The new book opens with the sinking of the USS *Wasp* (CV-7) by the Japanese submarine *I-19* in September 1942. *Wasp* was not the only casualty of that submarine attack, but she was arguably the most important. The incident illustrates that although the Battle of Midway was an incredible victory for the United States, the Japanese were far from defeated. The ensuing battles to secure Guadalcanal cost both navies dearly, but they proved to be pivotal for the Americans.

Next is the Battle of Santa Cruz, in which the carrier USS *Hornet* (CV-12) is lost and the carrier USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) is (again) heavily damaged. Once more, the Americans cannot muster a handful of carriers to fight the Japanese. However, the Japanese lost more aircrews. As Cleaver details throughout the book, this war of attrition continues to favor the Americans.

After setting the stage in the early phase of the Pacific war, Cleaver moves to the prewar years to write about aircraft carriers and their continuing development. He describes the hardware of war, and offers the observation that before Pearl Harbor, the US Navy considered battleships the primary striking force of its fleet, with carriers providing support for surface actions. Even before the war, however, fleet exercises revealed the offensive power of carriers, including several successful “strikes” on Pearl Harbor. While not as exciting as the book’s narrative portions, the prewar doctrine and development is an essential

piece of Pacific war history. Also important is the comparison and contrast Cleaver makes between the two enemy navies and their attitudes toward carrier warfare. He further remarks on the physical development of the US carrier, providing ample detail about the vessels and their equipment.

As Cleaver states in his book, however sound a carrier may have been, it was its aircraft that provided the “punch.” Thus, he examines the different planes of each fleet. Their evolution, and that of their tactics, receives ample space, excellent for showcasing the maturation of American doctrine.

Familiar names appear throughout the book—Chester Nimitz, Raymond Spruance, Marc Mitscher, Thomas Sprague, Jisaburo Ozawa, Chuichi Nagumo, Takeo Kurita—and Cleaver dissects the complicated relationships among senior commanders. He provides, for example, a profile of US Navy commander Miles Browning, the part genius, part silent-movie villain who pioneered carrier strategy. Yet Cleaver doesn’t forget about the rank and file that carried out the orders of the higher-ups. The pilots of fighters, torpedo bombers, and dive bombers as well as air crewmen and deck crewmen are all given space. The inclusion of their experiences gives the book its true voice. Cleaver’s treatment of the Battle off Samar, a true David-vs.-Goliath confrontation, is still more evidence that this book is about far more than the strategic concerns of nations. A tale often told, it is still compelling in Cleaver’s able hands.

As with most Osprey titles, Cleaver’s book contains a wealth of photographs. There are also plenty of maps, which are an absolute necessity if you’re writing about military history, especially events covering the huge distances in the Pacific.

Pacific Thunder is an exciting take on the US Navy—from its defeat at Pearl Harbor to its ultimate victory over the Imperial Japanese Navy.

MICHAEL EDWARDS
New Orleans, Louisiana

The Jersey Brothers: A Missing Naval Officer in the Pacific and His Family’s Quest to Bring Him Home

by Sally Mott Freeman, Simon and Schuster, 588 pages, \$28

WHEN READING a nonfiction history book, the end is normally well known. Readers are hoping to expand their knowledge of the means of *getting to* that end. Those details bring pleasure to serious students of history. Occasionally, they can pick up a book that gives them the information and analysis they desire, while also providing the guilty pleasure of a fictional mystery novel. The new history book *The Jersey Brothers: A Missing Naval Officer in the Pacific and His Family’s Quest to Bring Him Home* provides this dual benefit. It greatly expands the reader’s knowledge of the Pacific theater during World War II as it grips the reader with the harrowing and mysterious ordeal of one of the three titular Jersey Brothers. The fate of this brother is not revealed until the very end of the book. At times, the reader will want to skip ahead to the conclusion, but it’s imperative to follow the chapters.

Author Sally Mott Freeman has a personal connection to the three Jersey Brothers; she is the daughter of one and a niece of the other two. She grew up hearing interesting and painful stories about the brothers’ wartime service from family members. A professional speechwriter, she decided to research these stories, which proved to be a lengthy and arduous process. After 10 years, she has produced a comprehensive book that would make most professional historians proud. The only criticism is that the work could easily have been three books instead of one.

The three New Jersey-born protagonists—Bill and Benny Mott and half-brother Barton Cross—attended the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, but only two graduated. The youngest, Barton, dropped out and finished college at a traditional university. Bill, who was a US Navy lawyer and staff officer, was able to secure a commission for Barton in the presumably safe US Navy Supply Corps. Benny was a gunnery officer who was stationed on the USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) at Pearl Harbor.

Benny’s carrier was the most decorated

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PINUPS OF AMERICA IN WWII

AMERICA IN WWII

warship in US Navy history. The *Enterprise* escaped the infamy of Pearl Harbor because it was delayed in its return there from maneuvers. She participated in most of the US Navy exploits of the early fighting in the Pacific. She was hit many times, but refused to sink. She was also repaired numerous times, and sent back to sea duty. Freeman's description of *Enterprise*'s service is fascinating. After several dangerous and exciting years on board, Benny was reassigned as a staff officer in Washington, DC.

Bill's service early in the war was secretive and invaluable. He was essentially a cofounder of the White House Map Room. He routinely briefed President Franklin Roosevelt on military operations and covert matters, developing a close relationship with Roosevelt and his wife. He was able to use his position to get information on his missing brother, Barton, in the Philippines. Eventually, his desire to help find Barton made him request sea duty in

the Pacific. There, Bill served as the personal assistant and then flag secretary to the commanding admiral of a joint expeditionary force. He witnessed horrific naval fighting at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, including suicidal attacks by Japanese airplanes and boats.

The most gripping story in the book is about his youngest brother, Barton. The US Navy Supply Corps turned out not to be very safe. Barton got orders in the fall of 1941 to proceed to the USS *Otus* (ARG-20), a submarine tender (a ship that carried supplies for cramped subs), based at Cavite Naval Station in the Philippines. His base at Sangley Point was attacked by Japanese airplanes hours after the assault at Pearl Harbor. He was wounded by shrapnel during the raid and was taken to Sternberg Hospital in Manila. His ship was able to escape to Darwin, Australia.

Unlike the American and Filipino soldiers fighting later on Bataan and Corregi-

dor, Barton was taken captive very early in the war, on January 1, 1942. His wounds were still active when his captors moved him abruptly from the hospital to Bilibid, the notorious prison in Manila. From there, he was sent to other prisons—to Cabanatuan, to Davao Penal Colony, back to Cabanatuan and Bilibid, and to Japan twice. His itinerary and experience at the horrific Japanese POW camps could be a case study of Japanese brutality during the war. Amazingly, he endured, and encouraged others to do the same.

Barton's brothers and family, especially his mother in New Jersey, never gave up the search for information about him. Their story proves that in wartime, not knowing the fate of a relative can be worse than knowing. This book is well worth reading cover to cover. And don't jump ahead to the end.

DENNIS EDWARD FLAKE
Hummelstown, Pennsylvania

★ 78 RPM

I Heard the Bands On Christmas Day

THE UNITED STATES had been a combatant in World War II for just 17 days when the Glenn Miller Orchestra came on the radio on Christmas Eve 1941. The band's Chesterfield cigarettes-sponsored show had been a staple for a couple of years by then—three times a week, 15 minutes each—so its appearance at this uncertain time in the nation's history was a comfort to its audience.

Back in those days, just about everyone listened to the radio daily. That meant that for a major holiday such as Christmas, radio was a big part of what brought Americans together. Through the holiday stretch of 1941, they heard a lot of incredible breaking news mixed in with the regular lineup of shows, many with seasonal themes. Of course there was music. Christmastime had to have music.

The Glenn Miller Orchestra opened its Christmas Eve 1941 show by easing into its signature "Moonlight Serenade." Rhythmic sleigh bells perked things up, followed by what can fairly be described as rapping: "It's the night before Christmas, and all through the band, / we're singing and ringing and rockin' the stand...." The performers chimed in together for the final line: "From us, Merry Christmas to all in the land."

The yule-inflected "Serenade" segued into a mandatory "Jingle Bells," jazz style. In came a campy take on the bells-on-



bobtails-ring lyric, sung by saxophonist Ernie Caceres: "Down in Mexico / We have got no snow / (chorus:) You have got no snow? / (Caceres:) Down in Mexico. / Sit around all day, / Hear the music play. / Every time we sing, / Tequila glasses ring." That wrapped up the show's Christmas portion.

The next day was one of the greatest days in Christmas music history. Bing Crosby came on the air with his weekly show *The Kraft Music Hall*. He had recently begun shooting *Holiday Inn*, a movie musical set at a holiday-themed resort and featuring music by the iconic songwriter Irving Berlin. That Christmas Day, Crosby premiered the musical's sentimental ballad "White Christmas." The song only became the best-selling single in history (until Elton John's "Candle in the Wind" overtook it in 1997).

Throughout the war, Christmas radio specials continued to feature beloved songs and artists, even if they lacked the intensity of that first wartime holiday. Christmas Eve 1944, however, was especially emotional, for a sad reason. Listeners were shocked to hear that a plane carrying Glenn Miller, by then a US Army Air Forces officer, had disappeared over the English Channel. The popular bandleader whose radio show had set a hopeful mood for a distraught nation exactly three years earlier was never found. Christmas music helped Americans through difficult times, but war, in the end, was still war.

CARL ZEBROWSKI
editor of *America in WWII*

Accidental Medic



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ROBERT BOON



Robert Boon joined the National Guard to play sax. He was given a chair in his unit's band (front and center above), but he also was made a hospital technician, and was sent to Alaska.

WHEN 16-YEAR-OLD ROBERT BOON LIED about his age to join the Arkansas National Guard in 1939, he wasn't interested in shooting guns or wearing a snappy uniform. He wanted to play saxophone in the military band. "There was no high school band, and it [the military] provided free music lessons," he explained years later. That, combined with a regular paycheck, was too much to pass up.

The band was part of the Medical Detachment of the 206th Coast Artillery Battalion, whose duties in the small town of Marianna, Arkansas, were light. While most of the battalion practiced firing anti-aircraft guns, Boon and his fellow musicians received little martial training. If they ever found themselves in combat, they would serve as ancillary personnel for the medical company, carrying the wounded rather than firing weapons.

In August 1940, while Boon was attending Kemper Military School and College, his unit was called into federal service as the possibility of war increased. The 206th's commander gave the bat-

talion's college-age men the option of getting out, but Boon passed on the offer.

After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, the battalion shipped out to Dutch Harbor in Alaska's Aleutian Islands. Due to personnel shortages, musicians had to take on additional roles, and Boon worked as a technician in the local hospital. Air raid warnings were a regular occurrence. "We were just told to be ready to run for the hills," he recalled.

On the morning of June 2, 1942, the Japanese attacked, and the hospital was destroyed. As the enemy planes left the airspace over the harbor, Boon was dispatched to find wounded and assist with cleanup.

Boon served out the remainder of the war in the Aleutians. At war's end, he returned to civilian life, where he found new purpose in medical school and a career as a physician. ★

Submitted by JOSHUA BELL, National Park Service ranger for the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area.

Send your GIs photo and story to editor@americanwwii.com or to GIs, America in WWII, 4711 Queen Ave., Ste. 202, Harrisburg, PA 17109



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